











**THE  
TEMPLE  
CLASSICS**



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POEMS  
NARRATIVE  
ELEGIAC  
& LYRIC  
BY  
MATTHEW  
ARNOLD

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# POEMS NARRATIVE, ELEGIAC AND LYRIC

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

IN two small volumes of Poems, published anonymously, one in 1849, the other in 1852, many of the Poems which compose the present volume have already appeared. The rest are now published for the first time.

The  
Strayed  
Reveller  
and Em-  
pedocles

I have, in the present collection, omitted the Poem from which the volume published in 1852 took its title. I have done so, not because the subject of it was a Sicilian Greek born between two and three thousand years ago, although many persons would think this a sufficient reason. Neither have I done so because I had, in my own opinion, failed in the delineation which I intended to effect. I intended to delineate the feelings of one of the last of the Greek religious philosophers, one of the family of Orpheus and Musæus, having survived his fellows, living on into a time when the habits of Greek thought and feeling had begun fast to change, character to dwindle, the influence of the Sophists to prevail. Into the feelings of a man so situated there entered much that we are accustomed to consider as exclusively modern; how much, the fragments of

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

**Suppres-  
sion of Em-  
pedocles**

Empedocles himself which remain to us are sufficient at least to indicate. What those who are familiar only with the great monuments of early Greek genius suppose to be its exclusive characteristics, have disappeared; the calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested objectivity have disappeared: the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced; modern problems have presented themselves; we hear already the doubts, we witness the discouragement, of Hamlet and of Faust.

The representation of such a man's feelings must be interesting, if consistently drawn. We all naturally take pleasure, says Aristotle, in any imitation or representation whatever: this is the basis of our love of Poetry: and we take pleasure in them, he adds, because all knowledge is naturally agreeable to us; not to the philosopher only, but to mankind at large. Every representation therefore which is consistently drawn may be supposed to be interesting, inasmuch as it gratifies this natural interest in knowledge of all kinds. What is *not* interesting, is that which does not add to our knowledge of any kind; that which is vaguely conceived and loosely drawn; a representation which is general, indeterminate, and faint, instead of being particular, precise, and firm.

Any accurate representation may therefore be expected to be interesting; but, if the representation be a poetical one, more than this is demanded. It is demanded, not only that it shall interest, but also that it shall inspirit and rejoice the reader: that it shall convey a charm, and infuse delight. For the Muses, as Hesiod says, were born that

they might be "a forgetfulness of evils, and a truce from cares": and it is not enough that the Poet should add to the knowledge of men, it is required of him also that he should add to their happiness. "All Art," says Schiller, "is dedicated to Joy, and there is no higher and no more serious problem, than how to make men happy. The right Art is that alone, which creates the highest enjoyment."

Tragic poetry not painful

A poetical work, therefore, is not yet justified when it has been shown to be an accurate, and therefore interesting representation; it has to be shown also that it is a representation from which men can derive enjoyment. In presence of the most tragic circumstances, represented in a work of Art, the feeling of enjoyment, as is well known, may still subsist: the representation of the most utter calamity, of the liveliest anguish, is not sufficient to destroy it: the more tragic the situation, the deeper becomes the enjoyment; and the situation is more tragic in proportion as it becomes more terrible.

What then are the situations, from the representation of which, though accurate, no poetical enjoyment can be derived? They are those in which the suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done. In such situations there is inevitably something morbid, in the description of them something monotonous. When they occur in actual life, they are painful, not tragic; the representation of them in poetry is painful also.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

**Empe-  
docles'  
situation  
faulty** To this class of situations, 'poetically faulty as it appears to me, that of Empedocles, as I have endeavoured to represent him, belongs; and I have therefore excluded the Poem from the present collection.

And why, it may be asked, have I entered into this explanation respecting a matter so unimportant as the admission or exclusion of the Poem in question? I have done so, because I was anxious to avow that the sole reason for its exclusion was that which has been stated above; and that it has not been excluded in deference to the opinion which many critics of the present day appear to entertain against subjects chosen from distant times and countries: against the choice, in short, of any subjects but modern ones.

"The Poet," it is said,<sup>1</sup> and by an apparently intelligent critic, "the Poet who would really fix the public attention must leave the exhausted past, and draw his subjects from matters of present import, and *therefore* both of interest and novelty."

Now this view I believe to be completely false. It is worth examining, inasmuch as it is a fair sample of a class of critical dicta everywhere current at the present day, having a philosophical form and air, but no real basis in fact; and which are calculated to vitiate the judgment of readers of poetry, while they exert, so far as they are adopted, a misleading influence on the practice of those who write it.

What are the eternal objects of Poetry, among all nations, and at all times? They are actions;

<sup>1</sup> In *The Spectator* of April 2nd, 1853. The words quoted were not used with reference to poems of mine.

human actions ; possessing an inherent interest in Ancient themselves, and which are to be communicated in <sup>themes</sup> defended an interesting manner by the art of the Poet.

Vainly will the latter imagine that he has every-  
thing in his own power ; that he can make an  
intrinsically inferior action equally delightful with  
a more excellent one by his treatment of it : he  
may indeed compel us to admire his skill, but his  
work will possess, within itself, an incurable defect.

The Poet, then, has in the first place to select  
an excellent action ; and what actions are the most  
excellent ? Those, certainly, which most powerfully  
appal to the great primary human affections : to  
those elementary feelings which subsist permanently  
in the race, and which are independent of time.  
These feelings are permanent and the same ; that  
which interests them is permanent and the same  
also. The modernness or antiquity of an action,  
therefore, has nothing to do with its fitness for  
poetical representation ; this depends upon its in-  
herent qualities. To the elementary part of our  
nature, to our passions, that which is great and  
passionate is eternally interesting ; and interesting  
solely in proportion to its greatness and to its passion.  
A great human action of a thousand years ago is  
more interesting to it than a smaller human action  
of to-day, even though upon the representation of  
this last the most consummate skill may have been  
expended, and though it has the advantage of  
appealing by its modern language, familiar manners,  
and contemporary allusions, to all our transient  
feelings and interests. These, however, have no  
right to demand of a poetical work that it shall  
satisfy them ; their claims are to be directed else-

Great  
poetry  
needs great  
action

where. Poetical works belong to the domain of our permanent passions : let them interest these, and the voice of all subordinate claims upon them is at once silenced.

Achilles, Prometheus, Clytemnestra, Dido—what modern poem presents personages as interesting, even to us moderns, as these personages of an “exhausted past?” We have the domestic epic dealing with the details of modern life which pass daily under our eyes ; we have poems representing modern personages in contact with the problems of modern life, moral, intellectual, and social ; these works have been produced by poets the most distinguished of their nation and time ; yet I fearlessly assert that *Hermann and Dorothea*, *Childe Harold*, *Jocelyn*, *The Excursion*, leave the reader cold in comparison with the effect produced upon him by the latter books of the *Iliad*, by the *Oresteia*, or by the episode of Dido. And why is this? Simply because in the three latter cases the action is greater, the personages nobler, the situations more intense : and this is the true basis of the interest in a poetical work, and this alone.

It may be urged, however, that past actions may be interesting in themselves, but that they are not to be adopted by the modern Poet, because it is impossible for him to have them clearly present to his own mind, and he cannot therefore feel them deeply, nor represent them forcibly. But this is not necessarily the case. The externals of a past action, indeed, he cannot know with the precision of a contemporary ; but his business is with its essentials. The outward man of *OEdipus* or of *Macbeth*, the houses in which they lived, the

ceremonies of their courts, he cannot accurately figure to himself ; but neither do they essentially concern him. His business is with their inward man ; with their feelings and behaviour in certain tragic situations, which engage their passions as men ; these have in them nothing local and casual ; they are as accessible to the modern Poet as to a contemporary.

The whole  
more  
important  
than the  
parts

The date of an action, then, signifies nothing : the action itself, its selection and construction, this is what is all-important. This the Greeks understood far more clearly than we do. The radical difference between their poetical theory and ours consists, as it appears to me, in this : that, with them, the poetical character of the action in itself, and the conduct of it, was the first consideration ; with us, attention is fixed mainly on the value of the separate thoughts and images which occur in the treatment of an action. They regarded the whole ; we regard the parts. With them, the action predominated over the expression of it ; with us, the expression predominates over the action. Not that they failed in expression, or were inattentive to it ; on the contrary, they are the highest models of expression, the unapproached masters of the *grand style* : but their expression is so excellent because it is so admirably kept in its right degree of prominence ; because it is so simple and so well subordinated ; because it draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys. For what reason was the Greek tragic poet confined to so limited a range of subjects ? Because there are so few actions which unite in themselves, in the highest degree, the conditions of excellence :

Greek art and it was not thought that on any but an excellent subject could an excellent Poem be constructed. A few actions, therefore, eminently adapted for tragedy, maintained almost exclusive possession of the Greek tragic stage ; their significance appeared inexhaustible ; they were as permanent problems, perpetually offered to the genius of every fresh poet. This too is the reason of what appears to us moderns a certain baldness of expression in Greek tragedy ; of the triviality with which we often reproach the remarks of the chorus, where it takes part in the dialogue : that the action itself, the situation of Orestes, or Merope, or Alcmæon, was to stand the central point of interest, unforgotten, absorbing, principal ; that no accessories were for a moment to distract the spectator's attention from this ; that the tone of the parts was to be perpetually kept down, in order not to impair the grandiose effect of the whole. The terrible old mythic story on which the drama was founded stood, before he entered the theatre, traced in its bare outlines upon the spectator's mind ; it stood in his memory, as a group of statuary, faintly seen, at the end of a long and dark vista : then came the Poet, embodying outlines, developing situations, not a word wasted, not a sentiment capriciously thrown in : stroke upon stroke, the drama proceeded : the light deepened upon the group ; more and more it revealed itself to the riveted gaze of the spectator : until at last, when the final words were spoken, it stood before him in broad sunlight, a model of immortal beauty.

This was what a Greek critic demanded ; this was what a Greek poet endeavoured to effect. It

signified nothing to what time an action belonged ; we do not find that the *Perse* occupied a particularly high rank among the dramas of Æschylus, because it represented a matter of contemporary interest : this was not what a cultivated Athenian required ; he required that the permanent elements of his nature should be moved ; and dramas of which the action, though taken from a long-distant mythic time, yet was calculated to accomplish this in a higher degree than that of the *Perse*, stood higher in his estimation accordingly. The Greeks felt, no doubt, with their exquisite sagacity of taste, that an action of present times was too near them, too much mixed up with what was accidental and passing, to form a sufficiently grand, detached, and self-subsistent object for a tragic poem : such objects belonged to the domain of the comic poet, and of the lighter kinds of poetry. For the more serious kinds, for *pragmatic* poetry, to use an excellent expression of Polybius, they were more difficult and severe in the range of subjects which they permitted. Their theory and practice alike, the admirable treatise of Aristotle, and the unrivalled works of their poets, exclaim with a thousand tongues—“ All depends upon the subject ; choose a fitting action, penetrate yourself with the feeling of its situations ; this done, everything else will follow.”

But for all kinds of poetry alike there was one point on which they were rigidly exacting ; the adaptability of the subject to the kind of poetry selected, and the careful construction of the poem.

How different a way of thinking from this is ours ! We can hardly at the present day under-

All  
depends  
on subject

**Poetry** stand what Menander meant, when he told a man  
**versus**  
**rhetoric** who enquired as to the progress of his comedy that he had finished it, not having yet written a single line, because he had constructed the action of it in his mind. A modern critic would have assured him that the merit of his piece depended on the brilliant things which arose under his pen as he went along. We have poems which seem to exist merely for the sake of single lines and passages ; not for the sake of producing any total-impression. We have critics who seem to direct their attention merely to detached expressions, to the language about the action, not to the action itself. I verily think that the majority of them do not in their hearts believe that there is such a thing as a total-impression to be derived from a poem at all, or to be demanded from a poet ; they think the term a commonplace of metaphysical criticism. They will permit the Poet to select any action he pleases, and to suffer that action to go as it will, provided he gratifies them with occasional bursts of fine writing, and with a shower of isolated thoughts and images. That is, they permit him to leave their poetical sense ungratified, provided that he gratifies their rhetorical sense and their curiosity. Of his neglecting to gratify these, there is little danger ; he needs rather to be warned against the danger of attempting to gratify these alone ; he needs rather to be perpetually reminded to prefer his action to everything else ; so to treat this, as to permit its inherent excellences to develope themselves, without interruption from the intrusion of his personal peculiarities ; most fortunate, when he most entirely succeeds in effacing himself, and

in enabling a noble action to subsist as it did in Goethe's *Faust*.

But the modern critic not only permits a false practice ; he absolutely prescribes false aims.—“A true allegory of the state of one's own mind in a representative history,” the Poet is told, “is perhaps the highest thing that one can attempt in the way of poetry.”—And accordingly he attempts it. An allegory of the state of one's own mind, the highest problem of an art which imitates actions ! No assuredly, it is not, it never can be so : no great poetical work has ever been produced with such an aim. *Faust* itself, in which something of the kind is attempted, wonderful passages as it contains, and in spite of the unsurpassed beauty of the scenes which relate to Margaret, *Faust* itself, judged as a whole, and judged strictly as a poetical work, is defective : its illustrious author, the greatest poet of modern times, the greatest critic of all times, would have been the first to acknowledge it ; he only defended his work, indeed, by asserting it to be “something incommensurable.”

The confusion of the present times is great, the multitude of voices counselling different things bewildering, the number of existing works capable of attracting a young writer's attention and of becoming his models, immense : what he wants is a hand to guide him through the confusion, a voice to prescribe to him the aim which he should keep in view, and to explain to him that the value of the literary works which offer themselves to his attention is relative to their power of helping him forward on his road towards this aim. Such a

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

**Shak-  
speare** guide the English writer at the present day will nowhere find. Failing this, all that can be looked for, all indeed that can be desired, is, that his attention should be fixed on excellent models; that he may reproduce, at any rate, something of their excellence, by penetrating himself with their works and by catching their spirit, if he cannot be taught to produce what is excellent independently.

Foremost among these models for the English writer stands Shakspeare: a name the greatest perhaps of all poetical names; a name never to be mentioned without reverence. I will venture, however, to express a doubt, whether the influence of his works, excellent and fruitful for the readers of poetry, for the great majority, has been of unmixed advantage to the writers of it. Shakspeare indeed chose excellent subjects; the world could afford no better than Macbeth, or Romeo and Juliet, or Othello: he had no theory respecting the necessity of choosing subjects of present import, or the paramount interest attaching to allegories of the state of one's own mind; like all great poets, he knew well what constituted a poetical action; like them, wherever he found such an action, he took it; like them, too, he found his best in past times. But to these general characteristics of all great poets he added a special one of his own; a gift, namely, of happy, abundant, and ingenious expression, eminent and unrivalled: so eminent as irresistibly to strike the attention first in him, and even to throw into comparative shade his other excellences as a poet. Here has been the mischief. These other excellences were his

fundamental excellences as a poet; what distinguishes the artist from the mere amateur, says Goethe, is *Architectonicè* in the highest sense; that power of execution, which creates, forms, and constitutes: not the profoundness of single thoughts, not the richness of imagery, not the abundance of illustration. But these attractive accessories of a poetical work being more easily seized than the spirit of the whole, and their accessories being possessed by Shakspeare in an unequal degree, a young writer having recourse to Shakspeare as his model runs great risk of being vanquished and absorbed by them, and, in consequence, of reproducing, according to the measure of his power, these, and these alone. Of this preponderating quality of Shakspeare's genius, accordingly, almost the whole of modern English poetry has, it appears to me, felt the influence. To the exclusive attention on the part of his imitators to this it is in a great degree owing, that of the majority of modern poetical works the details alone are valuable, the composition worthless. In reading them one is perpetually reminded of that terrible sentence on a modern French poet—*il dit tout ce qu'il veut, mais malheureusement il n'a rien à dire.*

Let me give an instance of what I mean. I will take it from the works of the very chief among those who seem to have been formed in the school of Shakspeare: of one whose exquisite genius and pathetic death render him for ever interesting. I will take the poem of *Isabella*, or the *Pot of Basil*, by Keats. I choose this rather than the *Endymion*, because the latter work (which a modern critic has classed with the

Shak-  
speare-  
Keats

*"Isabella," its strength and weakness*

*Fairy Queen ! ), although undoubtedly there blows through it the breath of genius, is yet as a whole so utterly incoherent, as not strictly to merit the name of a poem at all. The poem of *Isabella*, then, is a perfect treasure-house of graceful and felicitous words and images : almost in every stanza there occurs one of those vivid and picturesque turns of expression, by which the object is made to flash upon the eye of the mind, and which thrill the reader with a sudden delight. This one short poem contains, perhaps, a greater number of happy single expressions which one could quote than all the extant tragedies of Sophocles. But the action, the story ? The action in itself is an excellent one ; but so feebly is it conceived by the Poet, so loosely constructed, that the effect produced by it, in and for itself, is absolutely null. Let the reader, after he has finished the poem of Keats, turn to the same story in the *Decameron* : he will then feel how pregnant and interesting the same action has become in the hands of a great artist, who above all things delineates his object ; who subordinates expression to that which it is designed to express.*

I have said that the imitators of Shakspeare, fixing their attention on his wonderful gift of expression, have directed their imitation to this, neglecting his other excellences. These excellences, the fundamental excellences of poetical art, Shakspeare no doubt possessed them—possessed many of them in a splendid degree ; but it may perhaps be doubted whether even he himself did not sometimes give scope to his faculty of expression to the prejudice of a higher poetical duty.

For we must never forget that Shakspeare is the great poet he is from his skill in discerning and firmly conceiving an excellent action, from his power of intensely feeling a situation, of intimately associating himself with a character ; not from his gift of expression, which rather even leads him astray, degenerating sometimes into a fondness for curiosity of expression, into an irritability of fancy, which seems to make it impossible for him to say a thing plainly, even when the press of the action demands the very directest language, or its level character the very simplest. Mr. Hallam, than whom it is impossible to find a saner and more judicious critic, has had the courage (for at the present day it needs courage) to remark, how extremely and faultily difficult Shakspeare's language often is. It is so : you may find main scenes in some of his greatest tragedies, *King Lear* for instance, where the language is so artificial, so curiously tortured, and so difficult, that every speech has to be read two or three times before its meaning can be comprehended. This overcuriousness of expression is indeed but the excessive employment of a wonderful gift—of the power of saying a thing in a happier way than any other man ; nevertheless, it is carried so far that one understands what M. Guizot meant, when he said that Shakspeare appears in his language to have tried all styles except that of simplicity. He has not the severe and scrupulous self-restraint of the ancients, partly no doubt, because he had a far less cultivated and exacting audience : he has indeed a far wider range than they had, a far richer fertility of thought ; in this respect he rises above them ;

**Shak-**  
**speare as**  
**a model** in his strong conception of his subject, in the genuine way in which he is penetrated with it, he resembles them, and is unlike the moderns : \*but in the accurate limitation of it, the conscientious rejection of superfluities, the simple and rigorous development of it from the first line of his work to the last, he falls below them, and comes nearer to the moderns. In his chief works, besides what he has of his own, he has the elementary soundness of the ancients ; he has their important action and their large and broad manner : but he has not their purity of method. He is therefore a less safe model ; for what he has of his own is personal, and inseparable from his own rich nature ; it may be imitated and exaggerated, it cannot be learned or applied as an art ; he is above all suggestive ; more valuable, therefore, to young writers as men than as artists. But clearness of arrangement, rigour of development, simplicity of style—these may to a certain extent be learned : and these may, I am convinced, be learned best from the ancients, who although infinitely less suggestive than Shakspeare, are thus, to the artist, more instructive.

What then, it will be asked, are the ancients to be our sole models ? the ancients with their comparatively narrow range of experience, and their widely different circumstances ? Not, certainly, that which is narrow in the ancients, nor that in which we can no longer sympathise. An action like the action of the *Antigone* of Sophocles, which turns upon the conflict between the heroine's duty to her brother's corpse and that to the laws of her country, is no longer one in which it is

possible that we should feel a deep interest. I am speaking too, it will be remembered, not of the best sources of intellectual stimulus for the general reader, but of the best models of instruction for the individual writer. This last may certainly learn of the ancients, better than anywhere else, three things which it is vitally important for him to know:—the all-importance of the choice of a subject; the necessity of accurate construction; and the subordinate character of expression. He will learn from them how unspeakably superior is the effect of the one moral impression left by a great action treated as a whole, to the effect produced by the most striking single thought or by the happiest image. As he penetrates into the spirit of the great classical works, as he becomes gradually aware of their intense significance, their noble simplicity, and their calm pathos, he will be convinced that it is this effect, unity and profoundness of moral impression, at which the ancient Poets aimed; that it is this which constitutes the grandeur of their works, and which makes them immortal. He will desire to direct his own efforts towards producing the same effect. Above all, he will deliver himself from the jargon of modern criticism, and escape the danger of producing poetical works conceived in the spirit of the passing time, and which partake of its transitoriness.

The present age makes great claims upon us: we owe it service, it will not be satisfied without our admiration. I know not how it is, but their commerce with the ancients appears to me to produce, in those who constantly practise it, a steady-

The  
Greeks  
as models

**Commerce with the Ancients** ing and composing effect upon their judgment, not of literary works only, but of men and events in general. They are like persons who have had a very weighty and impressive experience : they are more truly than others under the empire of facts, and more independent of the language current among those with whom they live. They wish neither to applaud nor to revile their age : they wish to know what it is, what it can give them, and whether this is what they want. What they want, they know very well ; they want to educe and cultivate what is best and noblest in themselves : they know, too, that this is no easy task—*χαλεπὸν* as Pittacus said, *χαλεπὸν ἐσθλὸν ἔμπεναι*—and they ask themselves sincerely whether their age and its literature can assist them in the attempt. If they are endeavouring to practise any art, they remember the plain and simple proceedings of the old artists, who attained their grand results by penetrating themselves with some noble and significant action, not by inflating themselves with a belief in the preeminent importance and greatness of their own times. They do not talk of their mission, nor of interpreting their age, nor of the coming Poet ; all this, they know, is the mere delirium of vanity ; their business is not to praise their age, but to afford to the men who live in it the highest pleasure which they are capable of feeling. If asked to afford this by means of subjects drawn from the age itself, they ask what special fitness the present age has for supplying them : they are told that it is an era of progress, an age commissioned to carry out the great ideas of industrial development and social amelioration.

They reply that with all this they can do nothing; ~~Goethe and Niebuhr~~ <sup>Niebuhr</sup> ~~on this age~~ that the elements they need for the exercise of their art are great actions, calculated powerfully and delightfully to affect what is permanent in the human soul; that so far as the present age can supply such actions, they will gladly make use of them; but that an age wanting in moral grandeur can with difficulty supply such, and an age of spiritual discomfiture with difficulty be powerfully and delightfully affected by them.

A host of voices will indignantly rejoin that the present age is inferior to the past neither in moral grandeur nor in spiritual health. He who possesses the discipline I speak of will content himself with remembering the judgments passed upon the present age, in this respect, by the men of strongest head and widest culture whom it has produced; by Goethe and by Niebuhr. It will be sufficient for him that he knows the opinions held by these two great men respecting the present age and its literature; and that he feels assured in his own mind that their aims and demands upon life were such as he would wish, at any rate, his own to be; and their judgment as to what is impeding and disabling such as he may safely follow. He will not, however, maintain a hostile attitude towards the false pretensions of his age; he will content himself with not being overwhelmed by them. He will esteem himself fortunate if he can succeed in banishing from his mind all feelings of contradiction, and irritation, and impatience; in order to delight himself with the contemplation of some noble action of a heroic time, and to enable others, through his representation of it, to delight in it also.

**Arnold  
and the  
dilettanti**

I am far indeed from making any claim, for myself, that I possess this discipline; or for the following Poems, that they breathe its spirit. But I say, that in the sincere endeavour to learn and practise, amid the bewildering confusion of our times, what is sound and true in poetical art, I seemed to myself to find the only sure guidance, the only solid footing, among the ancients. They, at any rate, knew what they wanted in Art, and we do not. It is this uncertainty which is disheartening, and not hostile criticism. How often have I felt this when reading words of disparagement or of cavil: that it is the uncertainty as to what is really to be aimed at which makes our difficulty, not the dissatisfaction of the critic, who himself suffers from the same uncertainty. *Non me tua turbida torrent Dicta: Dii me terrent, et Jupiter hostis.*

Two kinds of *dilettanti*, says Goethe, there are in poetry: he who neglects the indispensable mechanical part, and thinks he has done enough if he shows spirituality and feeling; and he who seeks to arrive at poetry merely by mechanism, in which he can acquire an artisan's readiness, and is without soul and matter. And he adds, that the first does most harm to Art, and the last to himself. If we must be *dilettanti*: if it is impossible for us, under the circumstances amidst which we live, to think clearly, to feel nobly, and to delineate firmly: if we cannot attain to the mastery of the great artists—let us, at least, have so much respect for our Art as to prefer it to ourselves: let us not bewilder our successors: let us transmit to them the practice of Poetry, with its boundaries and

wholesome regulative laws, under which excellent works may again, perhaps, at some future time, be produced, not yet fallen into oblivion through our neglect, not yet condemned and cancelled by the influence of their eternal enemy, Caprice.

Respect  
Art's law

Fox How, AMBLESIDE,  
*October 1, 1853.*

## ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND EDITION

I HAVE allowed the Preface to the former edition of these Poems to stand almost without change, because I still believe it to be, in the main, true. I must not, however, be supposed insensible to the force of much that has been alleged against portions of it, or unaware that it contains many things incompletely stated, many things which need limitation. It leaves, too, untouched the question, how far, and in what manner, the opinions there expressed respecting the choice of subjects apply to lyric poetry; that region of the poetical field which is chiefly cultivated at present. But neither have I time now to supply these deficiencies, nor is this the proper place for attempting it: on one or two points alone I wish to offer, in the briefest possible way, some explanation.

An objection has been ably urged to the classing together, as subjects equally belonging to a past time, *Oedipus* and *Macbeth*. And it is no doubt

Economy true that to Shakspeare, standing on the verge of  
~~of Power~~ the Middle Ages, the epoch of Macbeth was more familiar than that of OEdipus. But I was speaking of actions as they presented themselves to us moderns; and it will hardly be said that the European mind, since Voltaire, has much more affinity with the times of Macbeth than with those of OEdipus. As moderns, it seems to me, we have no longer any direct affinity with the circumstances and feelings of either; as individuals, we are attracted towards this or that personage, we have a capacity for imagining him, irrespective of his times, solely according to a law of personal sympathy; and those subjects for which we feel this personal attraction most strongly, we may hope to treat successfully. Alcestis or Joan of Arc, Charlemagne or Agamemnon—one of these is not really nearer to us now than another; each can be made present only by an act of poetic imagination: but this man's imagination has an affinity for one of them, and that man's for another.

It has been said that I wish to limit the Poet in his choice of subjects to the period of Greek and Roman antiquity: but it is not so: I only counsel him to choose for his subjects great actions, without regarding to what time they belong. Nor do I deny that the poetic faculty can and does manifest itself in treating the most trifling action, the most hopeless subject. But it is a pity that power should be wasted; and that the Poet should be compelled to impart interest and force to his subject, instead of receiving them from it, and thereby doubling his impressiveness. There is, it has been excellently said, an immortal strength in

the stories of great actions : the most gifted poet, <sup>Modern</sup> Intellect  
then, may well be glad to supplement with it that <sup>Intellect</sup> ~~fantastic~~  
mortal weakness, which, in presence of the vast  
spectacle of life and the world, he must for ever  
feel to be his individual portion.

Again, with respect to the study of the classical writers of antiquity : it has been said that we should emulate rather than imitate them. I make no objection : all I say is, let us study them. They can help to cure us of what is, it seems to me, the great vice of our intellect, manifesting itself in our incredible vagaries in literature, in art, in religion, in morals ; namely, that it is *fantastic*, and wants *sanity*. *Sanity*—that is the great virtue of the ancient literature : the want of that is the great defect of the modern, in spite of all its variety and power. It is impossible to read carefully the great ancients, without losing something of our caprice and eccentricity ; and to emulate them we must at least read them.

LONDON : June 1, 1854.

\*



# **NARRATIVE POEMS**



## SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

### AN EPISODE

AND the first grey of morning fill'd the east,  
And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.  
But all the Tartar camp along the stream  
Was hush'd, and still the men were plunged in  
sleep :

The  
camp by  
the Oxus

Sohrab alone, he slept not : all night long  
He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed ;  
But when the grey dawn stole into his tent,  
He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,  
And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,  
And went abroad into the cold wet fog,      10  
Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's tent.

Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd, which  
stood

Clustering like bee-hives on the low flat strand  
Of Oxus, where the summer floods o'erflow  
When the sun melts the snows in high Paniere :  
Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that low  
strand,

And to a hillock came, a little back  
From the stream's brink, the spot where first a  
boat,

In Peran-Wisa's tent. Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land.  
 The men of former times had crown'd the top <sup>20</sup>  
 With a clay fort : but that was fall'n ; and now  
 The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,  
 A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.  
 And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood  
 Upon the thick-piled carpets in the tent,  
 And found the old man sleeping on his bed  
 Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.  
 And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step  
 Was dull'd ; for he slept light, an old man's sleep ;  
 And he rose quickly on one arm, and said :— <sup>30</sup>  
 “ Who art thou ? for it is not yet clear dawn.  
 Speak ! is there news, or any night alarm ? ”  
 But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said :—  
 “ Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa : it is I.  
 The sun is not yet risen, and the foe  
 Sleep ; but I sleep not ; all night long I lie  
 Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.  
 For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek  
 Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,  
 In Samarcand, before the army march'd ; <sup>40</sup>  
 And I will tell thee what my heart desires.  
 Thou knowest if, since from Ader-baijan first  
 I came among the Tartars, and bore arms,  
 I have still serv'd Afrasiab well, and shown,  
 At my boy's years, the courage of a man.  
 This too thou know'st, that, while I still bear on  
 The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,  
 And beat the Persians back on every field,  
 I seek one man, one man, and one alone—  
 Rustum, my father ; who, I hoped, should greet, <sup>50</sup>  
 Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field.  
 His not unworthy, not inglorious son.

So I long hoped, but him I never find.  
 Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.  
 Let the two armies rest to-day : but I  
 Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords  
 To meet me, man to man : if I prevail,  
 Rustum will surely hear it ; if I fall—  
 Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.  
 Dim is the rumour of a common fight,      60  
 Where host meets host, and many names are sunk :  
 But of a single combat Fame speaks clear."

Sohrab  
seeks his  
father,  
Rustum

He spoke : and Peran-Wisa took the hand  
 Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and said :—  
 " O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine !  
 Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,  
 And share the battle's common chance with us  
 Who love thee, but must press for ever first,  
 In single fight incurring single risk,  
 To find a father thou hast never seen ?      70  
 Or, if indeed this one desire rules all,  
 To seek out Rustum—seek him not through fight :  
 Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,  
 O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son !  
 But far hence seek him, for he is not here.  
 For now it is not as when I was young,  
 When Rustum was in front of every fray :  
 But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,  
 In Seistan, with Zal, his father old.  
 Whether that his own mighty strength at last      80  
 Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age ;  
 Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.  
 There go!—Thou wilt not ? Yet my heart fore-  
 bodes  
 Danger or death awaits thee on this field.  
 Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost

Morning on the Oxus To us : fain therefore send thee hence, in peace  
 To seek thy father, not seek single fights  
 In vain :—but who can keep the lion's cub ?  
 From ravening ? and who govern Rustum's son ?  
 Go : I will grant thee what thy heart desires." 90  
 So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand, and left  
 His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay,  
 And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat  
 He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,  
 And threw a white cloak round him, and he took  
 In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword ;  
 And on his head he placed his sheep-skin cap,  
 Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-Kul :  
 And rais'd the curtain of his tent, and call'd  
 His herald to his side, and went abroad. 100

The sun, by this, had risen, and clear'd the fog  
 From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands :  
 And from their tents the Tartar horsemen filed  
 Into the open plain ; so Haman bade ;  
 Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa ruled  
 The host, and still was in his lusty prime.  
 From their black tents, long files of horse, they  
 stream'd :

As when, some grey November morn, the files,  
 In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes,  
 Stream over Casbin, and the southern slopes 110  
 Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,  
 Or some frore Caspian reed-bed, southward bound  
 For the warm Persian sea-board : so they stream'd.  
 The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,  
 First with black sheep-skin caps and with long  
 spears ;  
 Large men, large steeds ; who from Bokhara come  
 And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.

Next the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,  
 The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,      119      The  
 And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands ;      Tartar and  
 Light men, and on light steeds, who only drink  
 The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.  
 And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came  
 From far, and a more doubtful service own'd ;  
 The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks  
 Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards  
 And close-set skull-caps ; and those wilder hordes  
 Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste,  
 Kalmuks and unkemp'd Kuzzaks, tribes who stray  
 Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,      130  
 Who come on shaggy ponies from Paimere.  
 These all filed out from camp into the plain.  
 And on the other side the Persians form'd :  
 First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd,  
 The Ilyats of Khorassan : and behind,  
 The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,  
 Marshall'd battalions bright in burnished steel.  
 But Peran-Wisa with his herald came  
 Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,      139  
 And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.  
 And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw  
 That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,  
 He took his spear, and to the front he came,  
 And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where they  
 stood. \*

And the old Tartar came upon the sand  
 Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said :—  
 “ Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear !  
 Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.  
 But choose a champion from the Persian lords  
 To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man.”      150

**The challenge** As, in the country, on a morn in June,  
 When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,  
 A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—  
 So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,  
 A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran  
 Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they loved.

But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool,  
 Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,  
 That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of milk  
 snow ; 159

Winding so high, that, as they mount, they pass  
 Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,  
 Choked by the air, and scarce can they themselves  
 Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mul-  
 berries—

In single file they move, and stop their breath,  
 For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging  
 snows—

So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.

And to Ferood his brother Chiefs came up  
 To counsel : Gudurz and Zoarrah came,  
 And Feraburz, who ruled the Persian host  
 Second, and was the uncle of the King : 170  
 These came and counsell'd ; and then Gudurz  
 said :—

“ Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,  
 Yet champion have we none to match this youth.  
 He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.  
 But Rustum came last night ; aloof he sits  
 And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart :  
 Him will I seek, and carry to his ear  
 The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name.  
 Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight. 179  
 Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up.”

So spake he ; and Ferood stood forth and said :—  
 “ Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said.  
 Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man.”

The  
Persians  
fluttered

He spoke ; and Peran-Wisa turn’d, and strode  
 Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.  
 But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,  
 And cross’d the camp which lay behind, and  
 reach’d,

Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum’s tents.  
 Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,  
 Just pitch’d : the high pavilion in the midst      190  
 Was Rustum’s, and his men lay camp’d around.  
 And Gudurz enter’d Rustum’s tent, and found  
 Rustum : his morning meal was done, but still  
 The table stood beside him, charged with food ;  
 A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,  
 And dark green melons ; and there Rustum sat  
 Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,  
 And play’d with it ; but Gudurz came and stood  
 Before him ; and he look’d, and saw him stand ;  
 And with a cry sprang up, and dropp’d the bird,      200  
 And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said :—

“ Welcome ! these eyes could see no better  
 sight.

What news ? but sit down first, and eat and drink.”

But Gudurz stood in the tent door, and said :—  
 “ Not now : a time will come to eat and drink,  
 But not to-day : to-day has other needs.  
 The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze :  
 For from the Tartars is a challenge brought  
 To pick a champion from the Persian lords  
 To fight their champion—and thou know’st his  
 name—

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Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.

## SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

**Will  
Rustum  
fight?** O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's !  
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.  
And he is young, and Iran's Chiefs are old,  
Or else too weak ; and all eyes turn to thee.  
Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose."

He spoke : but Rustum answer'd with a smile :—  
“ Go to ! if Iran's Chiefs are old, then I  
Am older : if the young are weak, the King      219  
Errs strangely : for the King, for Kai Khosroo,  
Himself is young, and honours younger men,  
And lets the aged moulder to their graves.  
Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young—  
The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.  
For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame ?  
For would that I myself had such a son,  
And not that one slight helpless girl I have,  
A son so fam'd, so brave, to send to war,  
And I to tarry with the snow-hair'd Zal,  
My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,      230  
And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,  
And he has none to guard his weak old age.  
There would I go, and hang my armour up,  
And with my great name fence that weak old man,  
And spend the goodly treasures I have got,  
And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,  
And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings,  
And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no  
more.”

He spoke, and smiled ; and Gudurz made  
reply :—

“ What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,      240  
When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks  
Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks,  
Hidest thy face ? Take heed, lest men should say,

*Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,  
And shuns to peril it with younger men.'*

He will  
fight  
unknown

And, greatly moved, then Rustum made reply :—  
“ O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words ?  
Thou knowest better words than this to say.  
What is one more, one less, obscure or famed,  
Valiant or craven, young or old, to me ?      250  
Are not they mortal, am not I myself ?  
But who for men of nought would do great deeds ?  
Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame.  
But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms ;  
Let not men say of Rustum, he was match'd  
In single fight with any mortal man.”

He spokc, and frown'd ; and Gudurz turn'd,  
and ran

Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy,  
Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.  
But Rustum strode to his tent door, and call'd    260  
His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,  
And clad himself in steel : the arms he chose  
Were plain, and on his shield was no device,  
Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,  
And from the fluted spine atop a plume  
Of horsehair waved, a scarlet horsehair plume.  
So arm'd he issued forth ; and Ruksh, his horse,  
Follow'd him, like a faithful hound, at heel,  
Ruksh, whose renown was noised through all the  
earth,

The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once      270  
Did in Bokhara by the river find  
A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,  
And rear'd him ; a bright bay, with lofty crest ;  
Dight with a saddle-cloth of broider'd green  
Crusted with gold, and on the ground were work'd

**The Two champions** All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know :  
 So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd  
 The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.  
 And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts  
 Hail'd ; but the Tartars knew not who he was. 280  
 And dear as the wet diver to the eyes  
 Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,  
 By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,  
 Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,  
 Having made up his tale of precious pearls,  
 Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—  
 So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.

And Rustum to the Persian front advanced,  
 And Sohrab arm'd in Haman's tent, and came.  
 And as afield the reapers cut a swathe 290  
 Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,  
 And on each side are squares of standing corn,  
 And in the midst a stubble, short and bare ;  
 So on each side were squares of men, with spears  
 Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.  
 And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast  
 His eyes towards the Tartar tents, and saw  
 Sohrab come forth, and eyed him as he came.

As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,  
 Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge 300  
 Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire—  
 At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,  
 When the frost flowers the whiten'd window  
 panes—

And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts  
 Of that poor drudge may be ; so Rustum eyed  
 The unknown adventurous Youth, who from afar  
 Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth  
 All the most valiant chiefs : long he perused

His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.  
For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd ;  
Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and  
straight,

Rustum  
woos his  
310 unknown  
son

Which in a queen's secluded garden throws  
Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,  
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—  
So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.  
And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul  
As he beheld him coming ; and he stood,  
And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said :—

“ O thou young man, the air of Heaven is soft,  
And warm, and pleasant ; but the grave is cold. 320  
Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.  
Behold me : I am vast, and clad in iron,  
And tried ; and I have stood on many a field  
Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe :  
Never was that field lost, or that foe saved.  
O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death ?  
Be govern'd : quit the Tartar host, and come  
To Iran, and be as my son to me,  
And fight beneath my banner till I die.  
There are no youths in Iran brave as thou.” 330

So he spake, mildly : Sohrab heard his voice,  
The mighty voice of Rustum ; and he saw  
His giant figure planted on the sand,  
Sole, like some single tower, which a chief  
Has builded on the waste in former years  
Against the robbers ; and he saw that head,  
Streak'd with its first grey hairs : hope fill'd his soul ;  
And he ran forwards and embraced his knees,  
And clasp'd his hand within his own and said :—

“ Oh, by thy father's head ! by thine own  
soul !

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Sohrab  
suspects  
Rustum's  
identity

Art thou not Rustum? Speak! art thou not he?"  
But Rustum eyed askance the kneeling youth,  
And turn'd away, and spoke to his own soul:

"Ah me, I muse what this young fox may  
mean.

False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.  
For if I now confess this thing he asks,  
And hide it not, but say—*Rustum is here*—  
He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,  
But he will find some pretext not to fight,  
And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,  
A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.      351  
And on a feast day, in Afrasiab's hall,  
In Samarcand, he will arise and cry—  
'I challenged once, when the two armies camp'd  
Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords  
To cope with me in single fight; but they  
Shrank; only Rustum dared: then he and I  
Changed gifts, and went on equal terms away.'  
So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud.  
Then were the chiefs of Iran shamed through  
me."      360

And then he turn'd, and sternly spake aloud:—  
"Rise! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus  
Of Rustum? I am here, whom thou hast call'd  
By challenge forth: make good thy vaunt, or  
yield.

Is it with Rustum only thou wouldest fight?  
Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee.  
For well I know, that did great Rustum stand  
Before thy face this day, and were reveal'd  
There would be then no talk of fighting more.  
But being what I am, I tell thee this;      370  
Do thou record it in thine inmost soul:

Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt, and yield ;  
 Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds  
 Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer floods,  
 Oxus in summer wash them all away.”

Rustum  
taunts  
him :\*  
the fight  
begins

He spoke : and Sohrab answer’d, on his feet :—  
 “ Art thou so fierce ? Thou wilt not fright me so.  
 I am no girl, to be made pale by words.  
 Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand  
 Here on this field, there were no fighting then. 380  
 But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.  
 Begin : thou art more vast, more dread than I,  
 And thou art proved, I know, and I am young—  
 But yet Success sways with the breath of Heaven.  
 And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure  
 Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.  
 For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,  
 Poised on the top of a huge wave of Fate,  
 Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.  
 And whether it will heave us up to land,               390  
 Or whether it will roll us out to sea,  
 Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,  
 We know not, and no search will make us know :  
 Only the event will teach us in its hour.”

He spoke ; and Rustum answer’d not, but hurl’d  
 His spear : down from the shoulder, down it came,  
 As on some partridge in the corn a hawk  
 That long has tower’d in the airy clouds  
 Drops like a plummet : Sohrab saw it come,  
 And sprang aside, quick as a flash : the spear       400  
 Hiss’d, and went quivering down into the sand,  
 Which it sent flying wide :—then Sohrab threw  
 In turn, and full struck Rustum’s shield : sharp  
     rang,  
 The iron plates rang sharp, but turn’d the spear.

Rustum falls down. And Rustum seized his club, which none but he Could wield : an unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge, Still rough ; like those which men in treeless plains To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers, Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time 410 Has made in Himalayan forests wrack, And strewn the channels with torn boughs ; so huge

The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck One stroke ; but again Sohrab sprang aside Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand. And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and fell To his knees, and with his fingers clutch'd the sand :

And now might Sohrab have unsheathe'd his sword, And pierced the mighty Rustum while he lay 420 Dizzy, and on his knees, and choked with sand : But he look'd on, and smiled, nor bared his sword, But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said :—

“ Thou strik'st too hard : that club of thine will float

Upon the summer floods, and not my bones.  
But rise, and be not wroth ; not wroth am I :  
No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul.  
Thou say'st, thou art not Rustum : be it so.

Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul ?  
Boy as I am, I have seen battles too ; 430  
Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,  
And heard their hollow roar of dying men ;  
But never was my heart thus touch'd before.

Are they from Heaven, these softenings of the heart ?

O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven !  
 Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,  
 And make a truce, and sit upon this sand,  
 And pledge each other in red wine, like friends  
 And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.  
 There are enough foes in the Persian host      440  
 Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang ;  
 Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou  
 Mayst fight ; fight them, when they confront thy  
 spear.

Sohrab's  
instinct  
for peace

But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me ! ”

He ceased : but while he spake, Rustum had  
 risen,

And stood erect, trembling with rage : his club  
 He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear,  
 Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right hand  
 Blazed bright and baleful, like that autumn Star,  
 'The baleful sign of fevers : dust had soil'd      450  
 His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms.  
 His breast heaved ; his lips foam'd ; and twice his  
 voice

Was choked with rage : at last these words broke  
 way :—

“ Girl ! nimble with thy feet, not with thy  
 hands !

Curl'd i . ion, dancer, coiner of sweet words !  
 Fight ; let me hear thy hateful voice no more !  
 Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now  
 With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to  
 dance ;

But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance  
 Of battle, and with me, who make no play      460  
 Of war : I fight it out, and hand to hand.  
 Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine !

Rustum's  
 wrath wakes  
 Sohrab's

Remember all thy valour : try thy feints  
 And cunning : all the pity I had is gone :  
 Because thou hast shamed me before both the hosts  
 With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles."

He spoke ; and Sohrab kindled at his taunts,  
 And he too drew his sword : at once they rush'd  
 Together, as two eagles on one prey  
 Come rushing down together from the clouds, 470  
 One from the east, one from the west : their shields  
 Dash'd with a clang together, and a din  
 Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters  
 Make often in the forest's heart at morn,  
 Of hewing axes, crashing trees : such blows  
 Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.  
 And you would say that sun and stars took part  
 In that unnatural conflict ; for a cloud  
 Grew suddenly in Heaven, and dark'd the sun  
 Over the fighters' heads ; and a wind rose 480  
 Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,  
 And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair.  
 In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and they alone ;  
 For both the on-looking hosts on either hand  
 Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,  
 And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.  
 But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes  
 And labouring breath ; first Rustum struck the  
 shield  
 Which Sohrab held stiff out : the steel-spiked spear  
 Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach the skin,  
 And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry groan. 491  
 Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm,  
 Nor clove its steel quite through ; but all the crest  
 He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume,  
 Never till now desiled, sunk to the dust ;

And Rustum bow'd his head ; but then the gloom      Sohrab  
 Grew blacker : thunder rumbled in the air,      falls  
 And lightnings rent the cloud ; and Ruksh, the      transfixes  
 horse,

Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry :  
 No horse's cry was that, most like the roar      500  
 Of some pain'd desert lion, who all day  
 Has trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side,  
 And comes at night to die upon the sand :—  
 The two hosts heard that cry, and quaked for fear,  
 And Oxus curdled as it cross'd his stream.      }  
 But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but rush'd on,  
 And struck again ; and again Rustum bow'd  
 His head ; but this time all the blade, like glass,  
 Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,  
 And in his hand the hilt remained alone.      510

Then Rustum raised his head : his dreadful eyes  
 Glared, and he shook on high his menacing spear,  
 And shouted, *Rustum !* Sohrab heard that shout,  
 And shrank amazed : back he recoil'd one step,  
 And scann'd with blinking eyes the advancing  
 Form :

And then he stood bewilder'd ; and he dropp'd  
 His covering shield, and the spear pierced his side.  
 He reel'd, and staggering back, sunk to the ground.  
 And then the gloom dispersed, and the wind fell,  
 And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all      520  
 The cloud ; and the two armies saw the pair ;  
 Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,  
 And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.

Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began :—  
 “ Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill  
 A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,  
 And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent.

**Recrimina-** Or else that the great Rustum would come down  
**tions** Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move  
His heart to take a gift, and let thee go. 536  
And then that all the Tartar host would praise  
Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame,  
To glad thy father in his weak old age.

Fool ! thou art slain, and by an unknown man !  
Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be,  
Than to thy friends, and to thy father old.”

And with a fearless mien Sohrab replied :—  
“ Unknown thou art ; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.  
Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man !  
No ! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart. 540  
For were I match’d with ten such men as thou,  
And I were he who till to-day I was,  
They should be lying here, I standing there.  
But that beloved name unnerved my arm—  
That name, and something, I confess, in thee,  
Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield  
Fall ; and thy spear transfix’d an unarm’d foe.  
And now thou boastest, and insult’st my fate.  
But hear thou this, fierce Man, tremble to hear !  
The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death ! 550  
My father, whom I seek through all the world,  
He shall avenge my death, and punish thee ! ”

As when some hunter in the spring hath found  
A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,  
Upon the craggy isle of a hill lake,  
And pierced her with an arrow as she rose,  
And follow’d her to find her where she fell  
Far off ;—anon her mate comes winging back  
From hunting, and a great way off descries  
His huddling young left sole ; at that, he checks  
His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps 552

Circles above his eyry, with loud screams  
 Chiding his mate back to her nest ; but she  
 Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,  
 In some far stony gorge out of his ken,  
 A heap of fluttering feathers : never more  
 Shall the lake glass her, flying over it ;  
 Never the black and dripping precipices  
 Echo her stormy scream as she sails by :—  
 As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss—  
 So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood   571  
 Over his dying son, and knew him not.

Rustum's  
son?

But with a cold, incredulous voice, he said :—  
 ‘ What prate is this of fathers and revenge ?  
 The mighty Rustum never had a son.’

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied :—  
 “ Ah yes, he had ! and that lost son am I.  
 Surely the news will one day reach his ear,  
 Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,  
 Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here ;  
 And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap   581  
 To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.  
 Fierce Man, bethink thee, for an only son !  
 What will that grief, what will that vengeance be !  
 Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen !  
 Yet him I pity not so much, but her,  
 My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells  
 With that old King, her father, who grows grey  
 With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.  
 Her most I pity, who no more will see   590  
 Sohrab returning from the T'artar camp,  
 With spoils and honour, when the war is done.  
 But a dark rumour will be bruited up,  
 From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear ;  
 And then will that defenceless woman learn

**Sohrab's mother** That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more ;  
 But that in battle with a nameless foe,  
 By the far distant Oxus, he is slain."

He spoke ; and as he ceased he wept aloud,  
 Thinking of her he left, and his own death. 600  
 He spoke; but Rustum listen'd, plunged in thought.  
 Nor did he yet believe it was his son  
 Who spoke, although he call'd back names he  
 knew ;  
 For he had had sure tidings that the babe,  
 Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,  
 Had been a puny girl, no boy at all :  
 So that sad mother sent him word, for fear  
 Rustum should take the boy, to train in arms ;  
 And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,  
 By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son ; 610  
 Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.  
 So deem'd he ; yet he listen'd, plunged in thought ;  
 And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide  
 Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore  
 At the full moon : tears gathered in his eyes ;  
 For he remembered his own early youth,  
 And all its bounding rapture ; as, at dawn,  
 The Shepherd from his mountain lodge descries  
 A far bright City, smitten by the sun,  
 Through many rolling clouds ;—so Rustum saw 620  
 His youth ; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom ;  
 And that old King, her father, who loved well  
 His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child  
 With joy ; and all the pleasant life they led,  
 They three, in that long-distant summer-time—  
 The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt  
 And hound, and morn on those delightful hills  
 In Ader-baijan. And he saw that Youth,

## **SOHRAB AND RUSTUM**

47

Of age and looks to be his own dear son,  
Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand, 630 Rustum  
doubts

Like some rich hyacinth, which by the scythe

Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,

## Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,

And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,

On the mown, dying grass;—so Sohrab lay,

**Lovely in death, upon the common sand.**

And Rustuni gazed on him with grief, and said :—

"O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son

**Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have  
joyed!**

Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men 640

Have told thee false;—thou art not Rustum's

For Rustum had no son : one child he had—

But one—a girl: who with her mother now

Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us—

Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war."

But Sohrab answer'd him in wrath ; for now

The anguish of the deep-fix'd spear grew fierce,  
And he desired to draw forth the steel.

And let the blood flow free, and so to die:

But first he would convince his stubborn foe.

And, rising sternly on one arm, he said :—

"Man, who art thou who dost deny my

**Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,**

**And Falsehood, while I liv'd, was far f**

I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm I bear

That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,

**That she might prick it on the babe she bore."**

He spoke: and all the blood left Rustum.

**cheeks;**

And his knees totter'd, and he smote his

Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand, 660

Rustum  
convinced  
despairs

That the hard iron corslet clank'd aloud :  
And to his heart he press'd the other hand,  
And in a hollow voice he spake, and said :—

“ Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie.  
If thou shew this, then art thou Rustum's son.”

Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loosed  
His belt, and near the shoulder bared his arm,  
And shew'd a sign in faint vermillion points  
Prick'd : as a cunning workman, in Pekin, 669  
Pricks with vermillion some clear porcelain vase,  
An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints,  
And all day long, and, when night comes, the  
lamp

Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands :—  
So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd  
On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal.  
It was that Griffin, which of old rear'd Zal,  
Rustum's great father, whom they left to die,  
A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks.  
Him that kind Creature found, and rear'd, and  
loved—

Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign. 680  
And Sohrab bared that figure on his arm,  
And himself scann'd it long with mournful eyes,  
And then he touch'd it with his hand and said :—

“ How say'st thou ? Is that sign the proper  
sign  
Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's ? ”

He spoke : but Rustum gazed, and gazed, and  
stood

Speechless ; and then he utter'd one sharp cry—  
*O Boy—thy Father !*—and his voice choked there.  
And then a dark cloud pass'd before his eyes, 689  
And his head swam, and he sunk down to earth.

But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast  
 His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips,  
 And with fond faltering fingers stroked his cheeks,  
 Trying to call him back to life : and life  
 Came back to Rustum, and he oped his eyes,  
 And they stood wide with horror ; and he seized  
 In both his hands the dust which lay around,  
 And threw it on his head, and smirch'd his hair,  
 His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms :  
 And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,  
 And his sobs choked him ; and he clutch'd his  
 sword,

He  
would kill  
himself

701

To draw it, and for ever let life out.  
 But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,  
 And with a soothing voice he spoke, and said :—

“ Father, forbear : for I but meet to-day  
 The doom that at my birth was written down  
 In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious  
 hand.

Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,  
 When first I saw thee ; and thy heart spoke too,  
 I know it : but Fate trod those promptings down  
 Under its iron heel ; Fate, Fate engaged  
 The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's spear.

But let us speak no more of this : I find  
 My father ; let me feel that I have found.  
 Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take  
 My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,  
 And wash them with thy tears, and say, ‘ My  
 Son ! ’

Quick ! quick ! for number'd are my sands of life,  
 And swift ; for like the lightning to this field  
 I came, and like the wind I go away—  
 Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.

720

**Ruksh  
the horse** But it was writ in Heaven' that this should be." So said he : and his voice releas'd the heart Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth ; he cast His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud, And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts When they saw Rustum's grief : and Ruksh, the horse,

With his head bowing to the ground, and mane Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe First to the one then to the other moved 730 His head, as if enquiring what their grief Might mean ; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,

The big warm tears roll'd down, and caked the sand.

But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said :—

" Ruksh, now thou grievest ; but, O Ruksh, thy feet Should then have rotted on thy nimble joints, When first they bore thy Master to this field."

But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and said :—

" Is this then Ruksh ? How often, in past days, My mother told me of thee, thou brave Steed ! 740 My terrible father's terrible horse ; and said, That I should one day find thy lord and thee. Come, let me lay my hand upon thy name. O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I ; For thou hast gone where I shall never go, And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home. And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan, And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake Of Zirrah ; and the aged Zal himself 749 Has often stroked thy neck, and given thee food, Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,

And said—‘O Ruksh ! bear Rustum well !’— Father  
and son  
lament  
but I

Have never known my grandsire’s furrow’d face,  
Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,  
Nor slaked my thirst at the clear Helmund stream :  
But lodg’d among my father’s foes, and seen  
Afrasiab’s cities only, Samarcand,  
Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,  
And the black Toorkmun tents ; and only drunk  
The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,      760  
Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,  
The northern Sir ; and this great Oxus stream—  
The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die.”

And, with a heavy groan, Rustum replied :—  
“ Oh that its waves were flowing over me !  
Oh that I saw its grains of yellow silt  
Roll tumbling in the current o’er my head ! ”

And, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied :—  
“ Desire not that, my father ; thou must live.  
For some are born to do great deeds, and live,    770  
As some are born to be obscured, and die.  
Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,  
And reap a second glory in thine age.  
Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.  
But come : thou seest this great host of men  
Which follow me ; I pray thee, slay not these :  
Let me entreat for them : what have they done ?  
They follow’d me, my hope, my fame, my star.  
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.      779  
But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,  
But carry me with thee to Seistan,  
And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,  
Thou, and the snow-hair’d Zal, and all thy friends.  
And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,

The promised tomb      And heap a stately mound above my bones,  
                           And plant a far-seen pillar over all :  
                           That so the passing horseman on the waste  
                           May see my tomb a great way off, and say—  
                           *Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,*  
                           *Whom his great father did in ignorance kill—*      790  
                           And I be not forgotten in my grave.”

And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied :—  
 “ Fear not ; as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,  
 So shall it be : for I will burn my tents,  
 And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me.  
 And carry thee away to Seistan,  
 And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee.  
 With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.  
 And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,  
 And heap a stately mound above thy bones,      800  
 And plant a far-seen pillar over all :  
 And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.  
 And I will spare thy host : yea, let him go :  
 Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.  
 What should I do with slaying any more ?  
 For would that all whom I have ever slain  
 Might be once more alive ; my bitterest foes,  
 And they who were call'd champions in their time,  
 And through whose death I won that fame I have ;  
 And I were nothing but a common man,      810  
 A poor, mean soldier, and without renown ;  
 So thou mightest live too, my Son, my Son !  
 Or rather would that I, even I myself,  
 Might now be lying on this bloody sand,  
 Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,  
 Not thou of mine ; and I might die, not thou ;  
 And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan ;  
 And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine ;

And say—*O son, I weep thee not too sore,  
For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end.*— 820 Peace  
at last  
But now in blood and battles was my youth,  
And full of blood and battles is my age ;  
And I shall never end this life of blood.”

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied :—  
“A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful Man !  
But thou shalt yet have peace ; only not now ;  
Not yet : but thou shalt have it on that day,  
When thou shalt sail in a high-masted Ship,  
Thou and the other peers of Kai-Khosroo,  
Returning home over the salt blue sea, 830  
From laying thy dear Master in his grave.”

And Rustum gazed on Sohrab’s face, and said :—  
“ Soon be that day, my Son, and deep that sea !  
Till then, if Fate so wills, let me endure.”

He spoke ; and Sohrab smiled on him, and took  
The spear, and drew it from his side, and eased  
His wound’s imperious anguish : but the blood  
Came welling from the open gash, and life  
Flow’d with the stream : all down his cold white  
    side

The crimson torrent pour’d, dim now, and soil’d,  
Like the soil’d tissue of white violets 841  
Left, freshly gather’d, on their native bank,  
By romping children, whom their nurses call  
From the hot fields at noon : his head droop’d low,  
His limbs grew slack ; motionless, white, he lay—  
White, with eyes closed ; only when heavy gasps,  
Deep, heavy gasps, quivering through all his frame,  
Convuls’d him back to life, he open’d them,  
And fix’d them feebly on his father’s face :  
Till now all strength was ebb’d, and from his limbs  
Unwillingly the spirit fled away, 851

**Sohrab  
dead** Regretting the warm mansion which it left,  
And youth and bloom, and this delightful world.  
So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead.  
And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak  
Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.  
As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd  
By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear  
His house, now, mid their broken flights of steps,  
Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side— 860  
So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.

And night came down over the solemn waste,  
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,  
And darken'd all; and a cold fog, with night,  
Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,  
As of a great assembly loosed, and fires  
Began to twinkle through the fog: for now  
Both armies moved to camp, and took their meal:  
The Persians took it on the open sands  
Southward; the Tartars by the river marge: 870  
And Rustum and his son were left alone.

But the majestic River floated on,  
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,  
Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,  
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasmian waste,  
Under the solitary moon: he flow'd  
Right for the Polar Star, past Orgunjè,  
Brimming, and bright, and large: then sands begin  
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,  
And split his currents; that for many a league 880  
The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along  
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—  
Oxus forgetting the bright speed he had  
In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,  
A foil'd circuitous wanderer:—till at last

The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide      Tran.  
 His luminous home of waters opens, bright      quillity  
 And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed      A King's  
     stars      sicknes  
 Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

## THE SICK KING IN BOKHARA

HUSSEIN.

O most just Vizier, send away  
 The cloth-merchants, and let them be,  
 Them and their dues, this day : the King  
 Is ill at ease, and calls for thee.

THE VIZIER.

O merchants, tarry yet a day  
 Here in Bokhara : but at noon  
 To-morrow, come, and ye shall pay  
 Each fortieth web of cloth to me,  
 As the law is, and go your way.

O Hussein, lead me to the King.      10  
 Thou teller of sweet tales, thine own,  
 Ferdusi's, and the others', lead.  
 How is it with my lord ?

HUSSEIN.

Alone  
 Ever since prayer-time, he doth wait,  
 O Vizier, without lying down,  
 In the great window of the gate,

## THE SICK KING

The  
dead man

Looking into the Registan :  
Where through the sellers' booths the slaves  
Are this way bringing the dead man.  
O Vizier, here is the King's door.

20

THE KING.

O Vizier, I may bury him ?

THE VIZIER.

O King, thou know'st, I have been sick  
These many days, and heard no thing,  
(For Allah shut my ears and mind)  
Not even what thou dost, O King.  
Wherefore, that I may counsel thee,  
Let Hussein, if thou wilt, make haste  
To speak in order what hath chanced.

THE KING.

O Vizier, be it as thou say'st.

HUSSEIN.

Three days since, at the time of prayer,      30  
A certain Moollah, with his robe  
All rent, and dust upon his hair,  
Watch'd my lord's coming forth, and push'd  
The golden mace-bearers aside,  
And fell at the King's feet, and cried,

“ Justice, O King, and on myself !  
On this great sinner, who hath broke  
The law, and by the law must die !  
Vengeance, O King ! ”

But the King spoke :

“ What fool is this, that hurts our ears  
 With folly ? or what drunken slave ?  
 My guards, what, prick him with your spears !  
 Prick me the fellow from the path ! ”  
 As the King said, so was it done,  
 And to the mosque my lord pass'd on.

40 who  
craved  
justice on  
himself

But on the morrow, when the King  
 Went forth again, the holy book  
 Carried before him, as is right,  
 And through the square his path he took ;

My man comes running, fleck'd with blood      50  
 From yesterday, and falling down  
 Cries out most earnestly ; “ O King,  
 My lord, O King, do right, I pray !

“ How canst thou, ere thou hear, discern  
 If I speak folly ? but a king,  
 Whether a thing be great or small,  
 Like Allah, hears and judges all.

“ Wherefore hear thou ! Thou know'st, how fierce  
 In these last days the sun hath burn'd :  
 That the green water in the tanks      60  
 Is to a putrid puddle turn'd :  
 And the canal, that from the stream  
 Of Samarcand is brought this way  
 Wastes, and runs thinner every day.

“ Now I at nightfall had gone forth  
 Alone, and in a darksome place  
 Under some mulberry trees I found  
 A little pool : and in brief space

**He had  
cursed  
his kin** With all the water that was there  
I fill'd my pitcher, and stole home  
Unseen : and having drink to spare,  
I hid the can behind the door,  
And went up on the roof to sleep.

70

“ But in the night, which was with wind  
And burning dust, again I creep  
Down, having fever, for a drink.

“ Now meanwhile had my brethren found  
The water-pitcher, where it stood  
Behind the door upon the ground,  
And call'd my mother : and they all,  
As they were thirsty, and the night  
Most sultry, drain'd the pitcher there ;  
That they sate with it, in my sight,  
Their lips still wet, when I came down.

80

“ Now mark ! I, being fever'd, sick,  
(Most unblest also) at that sight  
Brake forth and curs'd them—dost thou hear ?—  
One was my mother——Now, do right ! ”

But my lord mused a space, and said :  
“ Send him away, Sirs, and make on.  
It is some madman,” the King said :  
As the King said, so was it done.

90

The morrow at the self-same hour  
In the King's path, behold, the man,  
Not kneeling, sternly fix'd : he stood  
Right opposite, and thus began,

Frowning grim down :—“Thou wicked King,  
Most deaf where thou shouldst most give ear !  
What, must I howl in the next world,  
Because thou wilt not listen here ?

He  
rates the  
King

100

“What, wilt thou pray, and get thee grace,  
And all grace shall to me be grudg'd ?  
Nay but, I swear, from this thy path  
I will not stir till I be judg'd.”

Then they who stood about the King  
Drew close together and conferr'd :  
Till that the King stood forth and said,  
“Before the priests thou shalt be heard.”

But when the Ulema were met  
And the thing heard, they doubted not ;  
But sentenced him, as the law is,  
To die by stoning on the spot.

Now the King charged us secretly :  
“Stoned must he be, the law stands so :  
Yet, if he seek to fly, give way :  
Forbid him not, but let him go.”

So saying, the King took a stone,  
And cast it softly : but the man,  
With a great joy upon his face,  
Kneel'd down, and cried not, neither ran.

120

So they, whose lot it was, cast stones ;  
That they flew thick, and bruised him sore :  
But he praised Allah with loud voice,  
And remain'd kneeling as before.

## THE SICK KING

The  
Vizier ex-  
pects

My lord had covered up his face :  
But when one told him, "He is dead,"  
Turning him quickly to go in,  
"Bring thou to me his corpse," he said.

And truly, while I speak, O King,  
I hear the bearers on the stair.      130  
Wilt thou they straightway bring him in ?  
—Ho ! enter ye who tarry there !

## THE VIZIER

O King, in this I praise thee not.  
Now must I call thy grief not wise.  
Is he thy friend, or of thy blood,  
To find such favour in thine eyes ?

Nay, were he thine own mother's son,  
Still, thou art king, and the Law stands.  
It were not meet, the balance swerv'd,  
The sword were broken in thy hands.      140

But being nothing, as he is,  
Why for no cause make sad thy face ?  
Lo, I am old : three kings, ere thee,  
Have I seen reigning in this place.

But who, through all this length of time,  
Could bear the burden of his years,  
If he for strangers pain'd his heart  
Not less than those who merit tears ?

Fathers we *must* have, wife and child ;  
And grievous is the grief for these :      150

This pain alone, which *must* be borne,  
Makes the head white, and bows the knees.

To each  
his load

But other loads than this his own  
One man is not well made to bear.  
Besides, to each are his own friends,  
To mourn with him, and shew him care.

Look, this is but one single place,  
Though it be great : all the earth round,  
If a man bear to have it so,  
Things which might vex him shall be found. 160

Upon the northern frontier, where  
The watchers of two armies stand  
Near one another, many a man,  
Seeking a prey unto his hand,

Hath snatch'd a little fair-hair'd slave :  
They snatch also, towards Mervè,  
The Shiah dogs, who pasture sheep,  
And up from thence to Urghendjè.

And these all, labouring for a lord,  
Eat not the fruit of their own hands : 170  
Which is the heaviest of all plagues,  
To that man's mind, who understands.

The kaffirs also (whom God curse ! )  
Vex one another, night and day :  
There are the lepers, and all sick :  
There are the poor, who faint alway.

## THE SICK KING

The  
King's  
grief

All these have sorrow, and keep still,  
Whilst other men make cheer, and sing.  
Wilt thou have pity on all these ?  
No, nor on this dead dog, O King !

180

## THE KING

O Vizier, thou art old, I young.  
Clear in these things I cannot see.  
My head is burning ; and a heat  
Is in my skin, which angers me.

But hear ye this, ye sons of men !  
They that bear rule, and are obey'd,  
Unto a rule more strong than theirs  
Are in their turn obedient made.

In vain therefore, with wistful eyes  
Gazing up hither, the poor man,  
Who loiters by the high-heap'd booths,  
Below there, in the Registān,

190

Says, " Happy he, who lodges there !  
With silken raiment, store of rice,  
And for this drought, all kinds of fruits,  
Grape syrup, squares of colour'd ice,

" With cherries served in drifts of snow."  
In vain hath a king power to build  
Houses, arcades, enamell'd mosques ;  
And to make orchard closes, fill'd

200

With curious fruit trees, bought from far ;  
 With cisterns for the winter rain ;  
 And in the desert, spacious inns  
 In divers places ;—if that pain

The  
King's  
tomb

Is not more lighten'd, which he feels,  
 If his will be not satisfied :  
 And that it be not, from all time  
 The Law is planted, to abide.

Thou wert a sinner, thou poor man !  
 Thou wert athirst ; and didst not see,      210  
 That, though we snatch what we desire,  
 We must not snatch it eagerly.

And I have meat and drink at will,  
 And rooms of treasures, not a few.  
 But I am sick, nor heed I these :  
 And what I would, I cannot do.

Even the great honour which I have,  
 When I am dead, will soon grow still.  
 So have I neither joy, nor fame.  
 But what I can do, that I will.      220

I have a fretted brick-work tomb  
 Upon a hill on the right hand,  
 Hard by a close of apricots,  
 Upon the road of Samarcand.

Thither, O Vizier, will I bear  
 This man my pity could not save :  
 And, tearing up the marble flags,  
 There lay his body in my grave.

**BALDER DEAD**

**Amends** Bring water, nard, and linen rolls.  
 Wash off all blood, set smooth each limb. 230  
 Then say; "He was not wholly vile,  
 Because a king shall bury him."

**BALDER DEAD****I. SENDING**

So on the floor lay Balder dead ; and round  
 Lay thickly strewn swords, axes, darts, and spears,  
 Which all the Gods in sport had idly thrown  
 At Balder, whom no weapon pierced or clove ;  
 But in his breast stood fixt the fatal bough  
 Of mistletoe, which Lok the Accuser gave  
 To Hoder, and unwitting Hoder threw—  
 'Gainst that alone had Balder's life no charm.

And all the Gods and all the Heroes came,  
 And stood round Balder on the bloody floor, 10  
 Weeping and wailing ; and Valhalla rang  
 Up to its golden roof with sobs and cries ;  
 And on the tables stood the untasted meats,  
 And in the horns and gold-rimm'd skulls the wine.  
 And now would night have fall'n, and found them  
 yet

Wailing ; but otherwise was Odin's will.  
 And thus the father of the ages spake :—

"Enough of tears, ye Gods, enough of wail !  
 Not to lament in was Valhalla made,  
 If any here might weep for Balder's death, 20  
 I most might weep, his father ; such a son  
 I lose to-day, so bright, so loved a God.

But he has met that doom, which long ago  
 The Nornies, when his mother bare him, spun,  
 And fate set seal, that so his end must be.  
 Balder has met his death, and ye survive—  
 Weep him an hour, but what can grief avail?  
 For ye yourselves, ye Gods, shall meet your doom,  
 All ye who hear me, and inhabit Heaven,  
 And I too, Odin too, the Lord of all.      30  
 But ours we shall not meet, when that day comes,  
 With women's tears and weak complaining cries—  
 Why should we meet another's portion so?  
 Rather it fits you, having wept your hour,  
 With cold dry eyes, and hearts composed and stern,  
 To live, as erst, your daily life in Heaven.  
 By me shall vengeance on the murderer Lok,  
 The foe, the accuser, whom, though Gods, we hate,  
 Be strictly cared for, in the appointed day.  
 Meanwhile, to-morrow, when the morning dawns,  
 Bring wood to the seashore to Balder's ship,      41  
 And on the deck build high a funeral-pile,  
 And on the top lay Balder's corpse, and put  
 Fire to the wood, and send him out to sea  
 To burn ; for that is what the dead desire.”

So spake the King of Gods, and straightway  
 rose,  
 And mounted his horse Sleipner, whom he rode ;  
 And from the hall of Heaven he rode away  
 To Lidskialf, and sate upon his throne,  
 The mount, from whence his eye surveys the  
 world.      50  
 And far from Heaven he turn'd his shining orbs  
 To look on Midgard, and the earth, and men.  
 And on the conjuring Lapps he bent his gaze  
 Whom antler'd reindeer pull over the snow ;

Odin's  
fatalism

**The Gods eat** And on the Finns, the gentlest of mankind,  
 Fair men, who live in holes under the ground ;  
 Nor did he look once more to Ida's plain,  
 Nor tow'rd Valhalla, and the sorrowing Gods ;  
 For well he knew the Gods would heed his word,  
 And cease to mourn, and think of Balder's pyre.

But in Valhalla all the Gods went back      61  
 From around Balder, all the Heroes went ;  
 And left his body stretch'd upon the floor.  
 And on their golden chairs they sate again,  
 Beside the tables, in the hall of Heaven ;  
 And before each the cooks who served them placed  
 New messes of the boar Serimnér's flesh,  
 And the Valkyries crown'd their horns with mead.  
 So they, with pent-up hearts, and tearless eyes,  
 Wailing no more, in silence ate and drank,      70  
 While twilight fell, and sacred night came on.

But the blind Hoder left the feasting Gods  
 In Odin's halls, and went through Asgard streets,  
 And past the haven where the Gods have moor'd  
 Their ships, and through the gate, beyond the  
 wall ;

Though sightless, yet his own mind led the God :  
 Down to the margin of the roaring sea  
 He came, and sadly went along the sand,  
 Between the waves and black o'erhanging cliffs  
 Where in and out the screaming seafowl fly ;      80  
 Until he came to where a gully breaks  
 Through the cliff-wall, and a fresh stream runs  
 down

From the high moors behind, and meets the sea.  
 There, in the glen, Fensaler stands, the house  
 Of Frea, honour'd mother of the Gods,  
 And shows its lighted windows to the main.

There he went up, and pass'd the open doors ;  
 And in the hall he found those women old,  
 The prophetesses, who by rite eterne  
 On Frea's hearth feed high the sacred fire      90  
 Both night and day ; and by the inner wall  
 Upon her golden chair the Mother sate,  
 With folded hands, revolving things to come.  
 To her drew Hoder near, and spake, and said :—

Blind  
Hoder  
and Frea

“ Mother, a child of bale thou bat'st in me !  
 For, first, thou barest me with blinded eyes,  
 Sightless and helpless, wandering weak in Heaven ;  
 And, after that, of ignorant witless mind  
 Thou barest me, and unforeseeing soul ;  
 That I alone must take the branch from Lok, 100  
 The foe, the accuser, whom, though Gods, we hate,  
 And cast it at the dear-loved Balder's breast  
 At whom the Gods in sport their weapons threw—  
 'Gainst that alone had Balder's life no charm.  
 Now therefore what to attempt, or whither fly,  
 For who will bear my hateful sight in Heaven ?  
 Can I, O mother, bring them Balder back ?  
 Or—for thou know'st the fates, and things allow'd—  
 Can I with Hela's power a compact strike,      109  
 And make exchange, and give my life for his ? ”

He spoke, the mother of the Gods replied :—  
 “ Hoder, ill-fated, child of bale, my son,  
 Sightless in soul and eye, what words are these ?  
 That one, long portion'd with his doom of death,  
 Should change his lot, and fill another's life,  
 And Hela yield to this, and let him go !  
 On Balder Death hath laid her hand, not thee ;  
 Nor doth she count this life a price for that.  
 For many Gods in Heaven, not thou alone,  
 Would freely die to purchase Balder back,      120

A dark  
untravelled  
road

And wend themselves to Hela's gloomy realm.  
For not so gladsome is that life in Heaven  
Which Gods and heroes lead, in feast and fray,  
Waiting the darkness of the final times,  
That one should grudge its loss for Balder's sake,  
Balder their joy, so bright, so loved a God.  
But fate withstands, and laws forbid this way.  
Yet in my secret mind one way I know,  
Nor do I judge if it shall win or fail ;                      129  
But much must still be tried, which shall but fail."

And the blind Hoder answer'd her, and said :—  
“ What way is this, O mother, that thou show'st?  
Is it a matter which a God might try ? ”

And straight the mother of the Gods replied :—  
“ There is a road which leads to Hela's realm,  
Untrodden, lonely, far from light and Heaven.  
Who goes that way must take no other horse  
To ride, but Sleipner, Odin's horse, alone.  
Nor must he choose that common path of Gods  
Which every day they come and go in Heaven, 140  
O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,  
Past Midgard's fortress, down to earth and men.  
But he must tread a dark untravell'd road  
Which branches from the north of Heaven, and  
ride

Nine days, nine nights, toward the northern ice,  
Through valleys deep-engulph'd, with roaring  
streams.

And he will reach on the tenth morn a bridge  
Which spans with golden arches Giall's stream,  
Not Bifrost, but that bridge a damsel keeps,  
Who tells the passing troops of dead their way 150  
To the low shore of ghosts, and Hela's realm.  
And she will bid him northward steer his course.

Then he will journey through no lighted land,  
 Nor see the sun arise, nor see it set ;  
 But he must ever watch the northern Bear,  
 Who from her frozen height with jealous eye  
 Confronts the Dog and Hunter in the south,  
 And is alone not dipt in Ocean's stream.  
 And straight he will come down to Ocean's strand—  
 Ocean, whose watery ring enfolds the world, 160  
 And on whose marge the ancient giants dwell.  
 But he will reach its unknown northern shore,  
 Far, far beyond the outmost giant's home,  
 At the chink'd fields of ice, the waste of snow.  
 And he must fare across the dismal ice  
 Northward, until he meets a stretching wall  
 Barring his way, and in the wall a grate.  
 But then he must dismount, and on the ice  
 Tighten the girths of Sleipner, Odin's horse,  
 And make him leap the grate, and come within 170  
 And he will see stretch round him Hela's realm,  
 The plains of Niflheim, where dwell the dead,  
 And hear the roaring of the streams of Hell.  
 And he will see the feeble, shadowy tribes,  
 And Balder sitting crown'd, and Hela's throne.  
 Then must he not regard the wailful ghosts  
 Who all will flit, like eddying leaves, around ;  
 But he must straight accost their solemn queen,  
 And pay her homage, and entreat with prayers,  
 Telling her all that grief they have in Heaven 180  
 For Balder, whom she holds by right below ;  
 If haply he may melt her heart with words,  
 And make her yield, and give him Balder back."

She spoke ; but Hoder answer'd her and said :—  
 “ Mother, a dreadful way is this thou show'st ;  
 No journey for a sightless God to go ! ”

The way  
to Hela's  
realm

## BALDER DEAD

Balder borne home     And straight the mother of the Gods replied :—  
 “ Therefore thyself thou shalt not go, my son.  
 But he whom first thou meetest when thou com’st  
 To Asgard, and declar’st this hidden way,     190  
 Shall go ; and I will be his guide unseen.”

She spoke, and on her face let fall her veil,  
 And bow’d her head, and sate with folded hands,  
 But at the central hearth those women old,  
 Who while the Mother spake had ceased their toil,  
 Began again to heap the sacred fire.  
 And Hoder turn’d, and left his mother’s house,  
 Fensaler, whose lit windows look to sea ;  
 And came again down to the roaring waves,  
 And back along the beach to Asgard went,     200  
 Pondering on that which Frea said should be.

But night came down, and darken’d Asgard  
 streets

Then from their loathéd feasts the Gods arose,  
 And lighted torches, and took up the corpse  
 Of Balder from the floor of Odin’s hall,  
 And laid it on a bier, and bare him home  
 Through the fast-darkening streets to his own  
 house,

Breidablik, on whose columns Balder graved  
 The enchantments that recall the dead to life.  
 For wise he was, and many curious arts,     210  
 Postures of runes, and healing herbs he knew ;  
 Unhappy ! but that art he did not know,  
 To keep his own life safe, and see the sun.  
 There to his hall the Gods brought Balder home,  
 And each bespake him as he laid him down :—

“ Would that ourselves, O Balder, we were borne  
 Home to our halls, with torchlight, by our kin,  
 So thou might’st live, and still delight the Gods ! ”

They spake ; and each went home to his own house. Hermod's mission

But there was one, the first of all the Gods 220  
 For speed, and Hermod was his name in Heaven ;  
 Most fleet he was, but now he went the last,  
 Heavy in heart for Balder, to his house,  
 Which he in Asgard built him, there to dwell,  
 Against the harbour, by the city-wall.

Him the blind Hoder met, as he came up  
 From the sea cityward, and knew his step ;  
 Nor yet could Hermod see his brother's face,  
 For it grew dark ; but Hoder touch'd his arm.

And as a spray of honeysuckle flowers 230  
 Brushes across a tired traveller's face  
 Who shuffles through the deep dew-moisten'd dust,  
 On a May evening, in the darken'd lanes,  
 And starts him, that he thinks a ghost went by--  
 So Hoder brush'd by Hermod's side, and said :—

“ Take Sleipner, Hermod, and set forth with  
 dawn  
 To Hela's kingdom, to ask Balder back ;  
 And they shall be thy guides, who have the power.”

He spake, and brush'd soft by, and disappear'd.  
 And Hermod gazed into the night, and said :— 240

“ Who is it utters through the dark his hest  
 So quickly, and will wait for no reply ?  
 The voice was like the unhappy Hoder's voice.  
 Howbeit I will see, and do his hest ;  
 For there rang note divine in that command.”

So speaking, the fleet-footed Hermod came  
 Home, and lay down to sleep in his own house ;  
 And all the Gods lay down in their own homes.  
 And Hoder too came home, distraught with grief,  
 Loathing to meet, at dawn, the other Gods ; ago

Hoder's suicide : And he went 'in, and shut the door, and fixt  
 Balder's spirit His sword upright, and fell on it, and died.

But from the hill of Lidskialf Odin rose,  
 The throne, from which his eye surveys the world;  
 And mounted Sleipner, and in darkness rode  
 To Asgard. And the stars came out in heaven,  
 High over Asgard, to light home the King.  
 But fiercely Odin gallop'd, moved in heart ;  
 And swift to Asgard, to the gate, he came.  
 And terribly the hoofs of Sleipner rang      260  
 Along the flinty floor of Asgard streets,  
 And the Gods trembled on their golden beds  
 Hearing the wrathful Father coming home--  
 For dread, for like a whirlwind, Odin came.  
 And to Valhalla's gate he rode, and left  
 Sleipner ; and Sleipner went to his own stall ,  
 And in Valhalla Odin laid him down.

But in Breidablik, Nanna, Balder's wife,  
 Came with the Goddesses who wrought her will,  
 And stood by Balder lying on his bier.      270

And at his head and feet she station'd Scalds  
 Who in their lives were famous for their song ;  
 These o'er the corpse intoned a plaintive strain,  
 A dirge—and Nanna and her train replied.  
 And far into the night they wail'd their dirge.  
 But when their souls were satisfied with wail,  
 They went, and laid them down, and Nanna went  
 Into an upper chamber, and lay down ;  
 And Frea seal'd her tired lids with sleep.

And 'twas when night is bordering hard on  
 dawn,      280  
 When air is chilliest, and the stars sunk low ;  
 Then Balder's spirit through the gloom drew near,  
 In garb, in form, in feature as he was,

Alive ; and still the rays were round his head  
 Which were his glorious mark in Heaven ; he  
 stood

seeks  
 Nanna  
 his wife

Over against the curtain of the bed,  
 And gazed on Nanna as she slept, and spake :—  
 “ Poor lamb, thou sleepest, and forgett’st thy  
 woe !

Tears stand upon the lashes of thine eyes,  
 Tears wet the pillow by thy cheek ; but thou, 290  
 Like a young child, hast cried thyself to sleep.  
 Sleep on ; I watch thee, and am here to aid.  
 Alive I kept not far from thee, dear soul !  
 Neither do I neglect thee now, though dead.  
 For with to-morrow’s dawn the Gods prepare  
 To gather wood, and build a funeral-pile  
 Upon my ship, and burn my corpse with fire,  
 That sad, sole honour of the dead ; and thee  
 They think to burn, and all my choicest wealth,  
 With me, for thus ordains the common rite. 300  
 But it shall not be so ; but mild, but swift,  
 But painless shall a stroke from Frea come,  
 To cut thy thread of life, and free thy soul,  
 And they shall burn thy corpse with mine, not thee.  
 And well I know that by no stroke of death,  
 Tardy or swift, would’st thou be loath to die,  
 So it restored thee, Nanna, to my side,  
 Whom thou so well hast loved ; but I can smooth  
 Thy way, and this, at least, my prayers avail.  
 Yes, and I fain would altogether wad 310  
 Death from thy head, and with the Gods in  
 Heaven

Prolong thy life, though not by thee desired—  
 But right bars this, not only thy desire.  
 Yet dreary, Nanna, is the life they lead

Nanna In that dim world, in Hela's mouldering realm ;  
dies in sleep And doleful are the ghosts, the troops of dead,  
Whom Hela with austere control presides.  
For of the race of Gods is no one there,  
Save me alone, and Hela, solemn queen ;  
And all the nobler souls of mortal men      320  
On battle-field have met their death, and now  
Feast in Valhalla, in my father's hall ;  
Only the inglorious sort are there below,  
The old, the cowards, and the weak are there—  
Men spent by sickness, or obscure decay.  
But even there, O Nanna, we might find  
Some solace in each other's look and speech,  
Wandering together through that gloomy world,  
And talking of the life we led in Heaven,  
While we yet lived, among the other Gods."      330

He spake, and straight his lineaments began  
To fade ; and Nanna in her sleep stretch'd out  
Her arms towards him with a cry—but he  
Mournfully shook his head, and disappear'd.  
And as the woodman sees a little smoke  
Hang in the air, afield, and disappear,  
So Balder faded in the night away.  
And Nanna on her bed sank back ; but then  
Frea, the mother of the Gods, with stroke  
Painless and swift, set free her airy soul,      340  
Which took, on Balder's track, the way below ;  
And instantly the sacred morn appear'd.

## **2. JOURNEY TO THE DEAD**

FORTH from the east, up the ascent of Heaven,  
Day drove his courser with the shining mane;

And in Valhalla, from his gable-perch,  
 The golden-crested cock began to crow.  
 Hereafter, in the blackest dead of night,  
 With shrill and dismal cries that bird shall crow,  
 Warning the Gods that foes draw nigh to Heaven ;  
 But now he crew at dawn, a cheerful note,  
 To wake the Gods and Heroes to their tasks.  
 And all the Gods, and all the Heroes, woke. 10  
 And from their beds the Heroes rose, and donn'd  
 Their arms, and led their horses from the stall,  
 And mounted them, and in Valhalla's court  
 Were ranged ; and then the daily fray began.  
 And all day long they there are hack'd and hewn,  
 'Mid dust, and groans, and limbs lopp'd off, and  
 blood ;  
 But all at night return to Odin's hall,  
 Woundless and fresh ; such lot is theirs in Heaven.  
 And the Valkyries on their steeds went forth 19  
 Tow'rd earth and sights of men ; and at their side  
 Skulda, the youngest of the Nornies, rode ;  
 And over Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,  
 Past Midgard fortress, down to earth they came ;  
 There through some battle-field, where men fall  
 fast,  
 Their horses fetlock-deep in blood, they ride,  
 And pick the bravest warriors out for death,  
 Whom they bring back with them at night to  
 Heaven

To glad the Gods, and feast in Odin's hall.

But the Gods went not now, as otherwhile,  
 Into the tilt-yard, where the Heroes fought, 30  
 To feast their eyes with looking on the fray ;  
 Nor did they to their judgment-place repair  
 By the ash Igdrasil, in Ida's plain,

Morning in  
Valhalla

Wood-  
gathering  
of the Gods

Where they hold council, and give laws for men.  
But they went, Odin first, the rest behind,  
To the hall Gladheim, which is built of gold ;  
Where are in circle ranged twelve golden chairs,  
And in the midst one higher, Odin's throne.  
There all the Gods in silence sate them down ;  
And thus the Father of the ages spake :— 40

“ Go quickly, Gods, bring wood to the seashore,  
With all, which it beseems the dead to have,  
And make a funeral-pile on Balder's ship ;  
On the twelfth day the Gods shall burn his corpse.  
But Hermod, thou, take Sleipner, and ride down  
To Hela's kingdom, to ask Balder back.”

So said he ; and the Gods arose, and took  
Axes and ropes, and at their head came Thor,  
Shouldering his hammer, which the giants know.  
Forth wended they, and drove their steeds before.  
And up the dewy mountain-tracks they fared 51  
To the dark forests, in the early dawn ;  
And up and down, and side and slant they roam'd  
And from the glens all day an echo came  
Of crashing falls ; for with his hammer Thor  
Smote 'mid the rocks the lichen-bearded pines,  
And burst their roots, while to their tops the Gods  
Made fast the woven ropes, and haled them down,  
And lopp'd their boughs, and clove them on the  
sward,  
And bound the logs behind their steeds to draw, 60  
And drove them homeward ; and the snorting  
steeds  
Went straining through the crackling brushwood  
down,  
And by the darkling forest-paths the Gods  
Follow'd, and on their shoulders carried boughs.

And they came out upon the plain, and pass'd  
 Asgard, and led their horses to the beach,  
 And loosed them of their loads on the seashore,  
 And ranged the wood in stacks by Balder's ship ;  
 And every God went home to his own house.

Balder's  
pyre :  
Hermod's  
journey

But when the Gods were to the forest gone, 70  
 Hermod led Sleipner from Valhalla forth  
 And saddled him ; before that, Sleipner brook'd  
 No meaner hand than Odin's on his mane,  
 On his broad back no lesser rider bore ;  
 Yet docile now he stood at Hermod's side,  
 Arching his neck, and glad to be bestrode,  
 Knowing the God they went to seek, how dear.  
 But Hermod mounted him, and sadly fared  
 In silence up the dark untravell'd road  
 Which branches from the north of Heaven, and  
 went

80

All day ; and daylight waned, and night came on.  
 And all that night he rode, and journey'd so,  
 Nine days, nine nights, toward the northern ice,  
 Through valley's deep-engulph'd, by roaring streams.  
 And on the tenth morn he beheld the bridge  
 Which spans with golden arches Giall's stream,  
 And on the bridge a damsel watching arm'd,  
 In the strait passage, at the farther end,  
 Where the road issues between walling rocks.  
 Scant space that warder left for passers by ;— 90  
 But as when cowherds in October drive  
 Their kine across a snowy mountain-pass  
 To winter-pasture on the southern side,  
 And on the ridge a waggon chokes the way,  
 Wedged in the snow ; then painfully the hinds  
 With goad and shouting urge their cattle past,  
 Plunging through deep untrodden banks of snow

The Wardress of the Bridge To right and left, and warm steam fills the air—  
 So on the bridge that damsel block'd the way,  
 And question'd Hermod as he came, and said :—  
 “ Who art thou on thy black and fiery horse 101  
 Under whose hoofs the bridge o'er Giall's stream  
 Rumbles and shakes? Tell me thy race and home.  
 But yestermorn, five troops of dead pass'd by,  
 Bound on their way below to Hela's realm,  
 Nor shook the bridge so much as thou alone.  
 And thou hast flesh and colour on thy cheeks,  
 Like men who live, and draw the vital air;  
 Nor look'st thou pale and wan, like men deceased,  
 Souls bound below, my daily passers here.” 110

And the fleet-footed Hermod answer'd her :—  
 “ O damsel, Hermod am I call'd, the son  
 Of Odin; and my high-roof'd house is built  
 Far hence, in Asgard, in the city of Gods;  
 And Sleipner, Odin's horse, is this I ride.  
 And I come, sent this road on Balder's track;  
 Say then, if he hath cross'd thy bridge or no?”

He spake; the warder of the bridge replied :—  
 “ O Hermod, rarely do the feet of Gods  
 Or of the horses of the Gods resound 120  
 Upon my bridge; and, when they cross, I know.  
 Balder hath gone this way, and ta'en the road  
 Below there, to the north, tow'rd Hela's realm.  
 From here the cold white mist can be discern'd,  
 Nor lit with sun, but through the darksome air  
 By the dim vapour-blotted light of stars,  
 Which hangs over the ice where lies the road.  
 For in that ice are lost those northern streams,  
 Freezing and ridging in their onward flow,  
 Which from the fountain of Vergelmer run, 130  
 The spring that bubbles up by Hela's throne.

There are the joyless seats, the haunt of ghosts,  
Hela's pale swarms ; and there was Balder bound.  
Ride off ! pass free ! but he by this is there."

Hermod  
reaches  
Hela's  
realm

She spake, and stepp'd aside, and left him room.  
And Hermod greeted her, and gallop'd by  
Across the bridge ; then she took post again.  
But northward Hermod rode, the way below ;  
And o'er a darksome tract, which knows no sun  
But by the blotted light of stars, he fared. 140  
And he came down to Ocean's northern strand,  
At the drear ice, beyond the giants' home.  
Thence on he journey'd o'er the fields of ice  
Still north, until he met a stretching wall  
Barring his way, and in the wall a grate.  
Then he dismounted, and drew tight the girths,  
On the smooth ice, of Sleipner, Odin's horse,  
And made him leap the grate, and came within.  
And he beheld spread round him Hela's realm,  
The plains of Niflheim, where dwell the dead, 150  
And heard the thunder of the streams of Hell.  
For near the wall the river of Roaring flows,  
Outmost ; the others near the centre run—  
The Storm, the Abyss, the Howling, and the  
Pain ;  
These flow by Hela's throne, and near their spring.  
And from the dark flock'd up the shadowy  
tribes ;—

And as the swallows crowd the bulrush-beds  
Of some clear river, issuing from a lake,  
On autumn-days, before they cross the sea ;  
And to each bulrush-crest a swallow hangs 160  
Quivering, and others skim the river-streams,  
And their quick twittering fills the banks and  
shores—

The So around Hermod swarm'd the twittering ghosts.  
 ghosts Women, and infants, and young men who died  
 Too soon for fame, with white ungraven shields ;  
 And old men, known to glory, but their star  
 Betray'd them, and of wasting age they died,  
 Not wounds ; yet, dying, they their armour wore,  
 And now have chief regard in Hela's realm.  
 Behind flock'd wrangling up a piteous crew, 170  
 Greeted of none, disfeatured and forlorn—  
 Cowards, who were in sloughs interr'd alive ;  
 And round them still the wattled hurdles hung,  
 Wherewith they stamp'd them down, and trod  
 them deep,  
 To hide their shameful memory from men.  
 But all he pass'd unhail'd, and reach'd the throne  
 Of Hela, and saw, near it, Balder crown'd,  
 And Hela set thereon, with countenance stern ;  
 And thus bespake him first the solemn queen :—  
 “ Unhappy, how hast thou endured to leave 180  
 The light, and journey to the cheerless land  
 Where idly flit about the feeble shades ?  
 How didst thou cross the bridge o'er Giall's stream,  
 Being alive, and come to Ocean's shore ?  
 Or how o'erleap the grace that bars the wall ? ”  
 She spake : but down off Sleipner Hermod sprang,  
 And fell before her feet, and clasp'd her knees ;  
 And spake, and mild entreated her, and said :—  
 “ O Hela, wherefore should the Gods declare  
 Their errands to each other, or the ways 190  
 They go ? the errand and the way is known.  
 Thou know'st, thou know'st, what grief we have  
 in Heaven  
 For Balder, whom thou hold'st by right below.  
 Restore him ! for what part fulfils he here ?

Shall he shed cheer over the cheerless seats,  
 And touch the apathetic ghosts with joy ?  
 Not for such end, O queen, thou hold'st thy realm.  
 For Heaven was Balder born, the city of Gods  
 And Heroes, where they live in light and joy.  
 Thither restore him, for his place is there ! ” 200

Hela  
speaks

He spoke; and grave replied the solemn queen :—  
 “ Hermod, for he thou art, thou son of Heaven !  
 A strange unlikely errand, sure, is thine.  
 Do the Gods send to me to make them blest ?  
 Small bliss my race hath of the Gods obtained.  
 Three mighty children to my father Lok  
 Did Angerbode, the giantess, bring forth—  
 Fenris the wolf, the Serpent huge, and me.  
 Of these the Serpent in the sea ye cast,  
 Who since in your despite hath wax'd amain, 210  
 And now with gleaming ring enfolds the world ;  
 Me on this cheerless nether world ye threw,  
 And gave me nine unlighted realms to rule ;  
 While on his island in the lake afar,  
 Made fast to the bored crag, by wile not strength  
 Subdued, with limber chains lives Fenris bound.  
 Lok still subsists in Heaven, our father wise,  
 Your mate, though loathed, and feasts in Odin’s  
 hall ;

But him too foes await, and netted snares,  
 And in a cave a bed of needle-rocks, 220  
 And o’er his visage serpents dropping gall.  
 Yet he shall one day rise, and burst his bonds,  
 And with himself set us his offspring free,  
 When he guides Muspel’s children to their bourne.  
 Till then in peril or in pain we live,  
 Wrought by the Gods—and ask the Gods our aid ?  
 Howbeit, we abide our day ; till then,

**Terms for  
Balder's  
release**

We do not as some feebler haters do—  
 Seek to afflict our foes with petty pangs,  
 Helpless to better us, or ruin them.      230

Come then ! if Balder was so dear beloved,  
 And this is true, and such a loss is Heaven's—  
 Hear, how to Heaven may Balder be restored.  
 Show me through all the world the signs of grief !  
 Fails but one thing to grieve, here Balder stops !  
 Let all that lives and moves upon the earth  
 Weep him, and all that is without life weep ;  
 Let Gods, men, brutes, beweep him ; plants and  
 stones !

So shall I know the lost was dear indeed,      239  
 And bend my heart, and give him back to Heaven.”

She spake ; and Hermod answer'd her, and  
 said :—

“ Hela, such as thou say'st, the terms shall be.  
 But come, declare me this, and truly tell :  
 May I, ere I depart, bid Balder hail,  
 Or is it here withheld to greet the dead ? ”

He spake, and straightway Hela answered him :—  
 “ Hermod, greet Balder if thou wilt, and hold  
 Converse ; his speech remains, though he be dead.”

And straight to Balder Hermod turn'd, and  
 spake :—

“ Even in the abode of death, O Balder, hail !      250  
 Thou hear'st, if hearing, like as speech, is thine,  
 The terms of thy releasement hence to Heaven ;  
 Fear nothing but that all shall be fulfill'd.  
 For not unmindful of thee are the Gods,  
 Who see the light, and blest in Asgard dwell ;  
 Even here they seek thee out, in Hela's realm.  
 And sure of all the happiest far art thou  
 Who ever have been known in earth or Heaven ;

Alive, thou wast of Gods the most beloved,  
And now thou sittest crown'd by Hela's side, 260 Balder's misgiving  
Here, and hast honour among all the dead."

He spake ; and Balder utter'd him reply,  
But feebly, as a voice far off ; he said :—

" Hermod the nimble, gild me not my death !  
Better to live a serf, a captured man,  
Who scatters rushes in a master's hall,  
Than be a crown'd king here, and rule the dead.  
And now I count not of these terms as safe  
To be fulfill'd, nor my return as sure,  
Though I be loved, and many mourn my death ; 270  
For double-minded ever was the seed  
Of Lok, and double are the gifts they give.  
Howbeit, report thy message ; and therewith,  
To Odin, to my father, take this ring,  
Memorial of me, whether saved or no ;  
And tell the Heaven-born Gods how thou hast seen  
Me sitting here below by Hela's side,  
Crown'd, having honour among all the dead."

He spake, and raised his hand, and gave the ring.  
And with inscrutable regard the queen 280  
Of Hell beheld them, and the ghosts stood dumb.  
But Hermod took the ring, and yet once more  
Kneel'd and did homage to the solemn queen ;  
Then mounted Sleipner, and set forth to ride  
Back, through the astonish'd tribes of dead, to  
Heaven.

And to the wall he came, and found the grate  
Lifted, and issued on the fields of ice.  
And o'er the ice he fared to Ocean's strand,  
And up from thence, a wet and misty road,  
To the arm'd damsel's bridge, and Giall's stream.  
Worse was that way to go than to return, 291

**Hermod's  
return to  
Asgard** For him ;—for others all return is barr'd.  
 Nine days he took to go, two to return.  
 And on the twelfth morn saw the light of Heaven.  
 And as a traveller in the early dawn  
 To the steep edge of some great valley comes,  
 Through which a river flows, and sees, beneath  
 Clouds of white rolling vapours fill the vale,  
 But o'er them, on the farther slope, descries  
 Vineyards, and crofts, and pastures, bright with  
 sun—

300

So Hermod, o'er the fog between, saw Heaven.  
 And Sleipner snorted, for he smelt the air  
 Of Heaven ; and mightily, as wing'd, he flew.  
 And Hermod saw the towers of Asgard rise ;  
 And he drew near, and heard no living voice  
 In Asgard ; and the golden halls were dumb.  
 Then Hermod knew what labour held the Gods ;  
 And through the empty streets he rode, and pass'd  
 Under the gate-house to the sands, and found  
 The Gods on the sea-shore by Balder's ship. 310

## 3. FUNERAL

THE Gods held talk together, group'd in knots,  
 Round Balder's corpse, which they had thither  
 borne ;  
 And Hermod came down tow'rds them from the  
 gate.  
 And Lok, the father of the serpent, first  
 Beheld him come, and to his neighbour spake :—  
 “ See, here is Hermod, who comes single back  
 From Hell ; and shall I tell thee how he seems ?  
 Like as a farmer, who hath lost his dog,  
 Some morn, at market, in a crowded town— 9

Through many streets the poor beast runs in vain,      *Loki's gibes*  
 And follows this man after that, for hours ;  
 And, late at evening, spent and panting, falls  
 Before a stranger's threshold, not his home,  
 With flanks a-tremble, and his slender tongue,  
 Hangs quivering out between his dust-smear'd  
 jaws,  
 And piteously he eyes the passers by ;  
 But home his master comes to his own farm,  
 Far in the country, wondering where he is—  
 So Hermod comes to-day unfollow'd home.”

And straight his neighbour, moved with wrath,  
 replied :—

“ Deceiver ! fair in form, but false in heart !  
 Enemy, mocker, whom, though Gods, we hate—  
 Peace, lest our father Odin hear thee gibe !  
 Would I might see him snatch thee in his hand,  
 And bind thy carcase, like a bale, with cords,  
 And hurl thee in a lake, to sink or swim !  
 If clear from plotting Balder's death, to swim ;  
 But deep, if thou devisedst it, to drown,  
 And perish, against fate, before thy day.”

So they two soft to one another spake.      30  
 But Odin look'd toward the land, and saw  
 His messenger ; and he stood forth, and cried.  
 And Hermod came, and leapt from Sleipner down,  
 And in his father's hand put Sleipner's rein,  
 And greeted Odin and the Gods, and said :—

“ Odin, my father, and ye, Gods of Heaven !  
 Lo, home, having perform'd your will, I come.  
 Into the joyless kingdom have I been,  
 Below, and look'd upon the shadowy tribes  
 Of ghosts, and communed with their solemn  
 queen ;

**Hermod** And to your prayer she sends you this reply :  
 reports  
 the terms Show her through all the world the signs of grief !  
*Fails but one thing to grieve, there Balder stops !*  
*Let Gods, men, brutes, beweep him ; plants and stones :*

*So shall she know your loss was dear indeed,  
 And bend her heart, and give you Balder back.”*

He spoke ; and all the Gods to Odin look'd ;  
 And straight the Father of the ages said :—

“ Ye Gods, these terms may keep another day.  
 But now, put on your arms, and mount your steeds,

And in procession all come near, and weep Balder ; for that is what the dead desire.  
 When ye enough have wept, then build a pile Of the heap'd wood, and burn his corpse with fire Out of our sight ; that we may turn from grief, And lead, as erst, our daily life in Heaven.”

He spoke, and the Gods arm'd ; and Odin donn'd

His dazzling corslet and his helm of gold,  
 And led the way on Sleipner ; and the rest Follow'd, in tears, their father and their king. 60  
 And thrice in arms around the dead they rode,  
 Weeping ; the sands were wetted, and their arms, With their thick-falling tears—so good a friend They mourn'd that day, so bright, so loved a God.  
 And Odin came, and laid his kingly hands On Balder's breast, and thus began the wail :—

“ Farewell, O Balder, bright and loved, my son ! In that great day, the twilight of the Gods, When Muspel's children shall beleaguer Heaven, Then we shall miss thy counsel and thy arm.” 70

Thou camest near the next, O warrior Thor !

Shouldering thy hammer, in thy chariot drawn,  
 Swaying the long-hair'd goats with silver'd rein ;  
 And over Balder's corpse these words didst say :—

The Gods  
bewail  
Balder

“ Brother, thou dwellest in the darksome land,  
 And talkest with the feeble tribes of ghosts,  
 Now, and I know not how they prize thee there—  
 But here, I know, thou wilt be miss'd and mourn'd.  
 For haughty spirits and high wraths are rife  
 Among the Gods and Heroes here in Heaven, 80  
 As among those whose joy and work is war ;  
 And daily strifes arise, and angry words.  
 But from thy lips, O Balder, night or day,  
 Heard no one ever an injurious word  
 To God or Hero, but thou keptest back  
 The others, labouring to compose their brawls.  
 Be ye then kind, as Balder too was kind !  
 For we lose him, who smoothed all strife in  
 Heaven.”

He spake, and all the Gods assenting wail'd.  
 And Freya next came nigh, with golden tears ; 90  
 The loveliest Goddess she in Heaven, by all  
 Most honour'd after Frea, Odin's wife.  
 Her long ago the wandering Oder took  
 To mate, but left her to roam distant lands ;  
 Since then she seeks him, and weeps tears of gold.  
 Names hath she many ; Vanadis on earth  
 They call her, Freya is her name in Heaven ;  
 She in her hands took Balder's head, and spake :—

“ Balder, my brother, thou art gone a road  
 Unknown and long, and haply on that way 100  
 My long-lost wandering Oder thou hast met,  
 For in the paths of Heaven he is not found.  
 Oh, if it be so, tell him what thou wast  
 To his neglected wife, and what he is,

**Freya's golden tears** And wring his heart with shame, to hear thy word !  
 For he, my husband, left me here to pine,  
 Not long a wife, when his unquiet heart  
 First drove him from me into distant lands ;  
 Since then I vainly seek him through the world,  
 And weep from shore to shore my golden tears,  
 But neither god nor mortal heeds my pain.      111  
 Thou only, Balder, wast for ever kind,  
 To take my hand, and wipe my tears, and say :  
*Weep not, O Freya, weep no golden tears !*  
*One day the wandering Oder will return,*  
*Or thou wilt find him in thy faithful search*  
*On some great road, or resting in an inn,*  
*Or at a ford, or sleeping by a tree.*  
 So Balder said ;—but Oder, well I know,  
 My truant Oder I shall see no more      120  
 To the world's end ; and Balder now is gone,  
 And I am left uncomforted in Heaven.”

She spake ; and all the Goddesses bewail'd.  
 Last from among the Heroes one came near,  
 No God, but of the hero-troop the chief—  
 Regner, who swept the northern sea with fleets,  
 And ruled o'er Denmark and the heathy isles,  
 Living ; but Ella captured him and slew ;—  
 A king whose fame then fill'd the vast of Heaven,  
 Now time obscures it, and men's later deeds.      130  
 He last approach'd the corpse, and spake, and  
 said :—

“ Balder, there yet are many Scalds in Heaven  
 Still left, and that chief Scald, thy brother Brage,  
 Whom we may bid to sing, though thou art gone.  
 And all these gladly, while we drink, we hear,  
 After the feast is done, in Odin's hall ;  
 But they harp ever on one string, and wake

Remembrance in our soul of wars alone,  
 Such as on earth we valiantly have waged,      139  
 And blood, and ringing blows, and violent death.      Regner  
 But when thou sangest, Balder, thou didst strike  
 Another note, and, like a bird in spring,  
 Thy voice of joyance minded us, and youth,  
 And wife, and children, and our ancient home.  
 Yes, and I, too, remember'd then no more  
 My dungeon, where the serpents stung me dead,  
 Nor Ella's victory on the English coast—  
 But I heard Thora laugh in Gothland Isle,  
 And saw my shepherdess, Aslauga, tend  
 Her flock along the white Norwegian beach.      150  
 Tears started to mine eyes with yearning joy  
 Therefore with grateful heart I mourn thee dead.”

So Regner spake, and all the Heroes groan'd.  
 But now the sun had pass'd the height of Heaven,  
 And soon had all that day been spent in wail;  
 But then the Father of the ages said :—

“ Ye Gods, there well may be too much of wail!  
 Bring now the gather'd wood to Balder's ship;  
 Heap on the deck the logs, and build the pyre.”

But when the Gods and Heroes heard, they  
     brought      160  
 The wood to Balder's ship, and built a pile,  
 Full the deck's breadth, and lofty; then the corpse  
 Of Balder on the highest top they laid,  
 With Nanna on his right, and on his left  
 Hoder, his brother, whom his own hand slew.  
 And they set jars of wine and oil to lean  
 Against the bodies, and stuck torches near,  
 Splinters of pine-wood, soak'd with turpentine;  
 And brought his arms and gold, and all his stuff,  
 And slew the dogs who at his table fed,      170

Balder's And his horse, Balder's horse, whom most he  
pyre loved,

And placed them on the pyre, and Odin threw  
A last choice gift thereon, his golden ring.  
The mast they fixt, and hoisted up the sails,  
Then they put fire to the wood ; and Thor  
Set his stout shoulder hard against the stern  
To push the ship through the thick sand ;—sparks  
flew

From the deep trench she plough'd, so strong a  
God

Furrow'd it ; and the water gurgled in.  
And the ship floated on the waves, and rock'd. 180  
But in the hills a strong east-wind arose,  
And came down moaning to the sea ; first squalls  
Ran black o'er the sea's face, then steady rush'd  
The breeze, and fill'd the sails, and blew the fire.  
And wreathed in smoke the ship stood out to sea.  
Soon with a roaring rose the mighty fire,  
And the pile crackled ; and between the logs  
Sharp quivering tongues of flame shot out, and  
leapt,

Curling and darting, higher, until they lick'd  
The summit of the pile, the dead, the mast, 190  
And ate the shrivelling sails ; but still the ship  
Drove on, ablaze above her hull with fire.

And the Gods stood upon the beach, and gazed.  
And while they gazed, the sun went lurid down  
Into the smoke-wrapt sea, and night came on.  
Then the wind fell, with night, and there was calm ;  
But through the dark they watch'd the burning ship  
Still carried o'er the distant waters on,  
Farther and farther, like an eye of fire. 199

And long, in the far dark, blazed Balder's pile ;

But fainter, as the stars rose high, it flared,  
 The bodies were consumed, ash choked the pile.  
 And as, in a decaying winter-fire,  
 A charr'd log, falling, makes a shower of sparks—  
 So with a shower of sparks the pile fell in,  
 Reddening the sea around ; and all was dark.

His ship  
burnt at  
sea

But the Gods went by starlight up the shore  
 To Asgard, and sate down in Odin's hall  
 At table, and the funeral-feast began.  
 All night they ate the boar Serimner's flesh, 210  
 And from their horns, with silver rimm'd, drank  
 mead,  
 Silent, and waited for the sacred morn.

And morning over all the world was spread.  
 Then from their loathéd feasts the Gods arose,  
 And took their horses, and set forth to ride  
 O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,  
 To the ash Igdrasil, and Ida's plain ;  
 Thor came on foot, the rest on horseback rode.  
 And they found Mimir sitting by his fount  
 Of wisdom, which beneath the ashtree springs ; 220  
 And saw the Nornies watering the roots  
 Of that world-shadowing tree with honey-dew.  
 There came the Gods, and sate them down on  
 stones ;

And thus the Father of the ages said :—

“ Ye Gods, the terms ye know, which Hermod  
 brought.

Accept them or reject them ! both have grounds.  
 Accept them, and they bind us, unfulfill'd,  
 To leave for ever Balder in the grave,  
 An unrecover'd prisoner, shade with shades.  
 But how, ye say, should the fulfilment fail ?— 230  
 Smooth sound the terms, and light to be fulfill'd ;

## BALDER DEAD

**Council  
of the  
Gods** For dear-beloved was Balder while he lived  
In Heaven and earth, and who would grudge him  
tears?

But from the traitorous seed of Lok they come,  
These terms, and I suspect some hidden fraud.  
Bethink ye, Gods, is there no other way?—  
Speak, were not this a way, the way for Gods?  
If I, if Odin, clad in radiant arms,  
Mounted on Sleipner, with the warrior Thor  
Drawn in his car beside me, and my sons,      240  
All the strong brood of Heaven, to swell my  
train,  
Should make irruption into Hela's realm,  
And set the fields of gloom ablaze with light,  
And bring in triumph Balder back to Heaven?"

He spake, and his fierce sons applauded loud.  
But Frea, mother of the Gods, arose,  
Daughter and wife of Odin; thus she said:—  
“Odin, thou whirlwind, what a threat is this!  
Thou threatenest what transcends thy might, even  
thine.

For of all powers the mightiest far art thou,      250  
Lord over men on earth, and Gods in Heaven;  
Yet even from thee thyself hath been withheld  
One thing—to undo what thou thyself hast ruled.  
For all which hath been fixt, was fixt by thee.  
In the beginning, ere the Gods were born,  
Before the Heavens were builded, thou didst slay  
The giant Ymir, whom the abyss brought forth,  
Thou and thy brethren fierce, the sons of Bor,  
And cast his trunk to choke the abysmal void  
But of his flesh and members thou didst build      260  
The earth and Ocean, and above them Heaven.  
And from the flaming world, where Muspel reigns,

Thou sent'st and fetched'st fire, and madest lights,      Cos-  
 Sun, moon, and stars, which thou hast hung in      mogony  
 Heaven,

Dividing clear the paths of night and day.

And Asgard thou didst build, and Midgard fort ;  
 Then me thou mad'st ; of us the Gods were born.

Last, walking by the sea, thon foundest spars  
 Of wood, and framed'st men, who till the earth,  
 Or on the sea, the field of pirates, sail.

270

And all the race of Ymir thou didst drown,  
 Save one, Bergelmer ;—he on shipboard fled  
 Thy deluge, and from him the giants sprang.  
 But all that brood thou hast removed far off,  
 And set by Ocean's utmost marge to dwell ;  
 But Hela into Nifheim thou threw'st,  
 And gav'st her nine unlighted worlds to rule,  
 A queen, and empire over all the dead.

That empire wilt thou now invade, light up  
 Her darkness, from her grasp a subject tear ?—280  
 Try it ; but I, for one, will not applaud.

Nor do I merit, Odin, thou should'st slight  
 Me and my words, though thou be first in Heaven ;  
 For I too am a Goddess, born of thee,

Thine eldest, and of me the Gods are sprung ;  
 And all that is to come I know, but lock  
 In mine own breast, and have to none reveal'd.

Come then ! since Hela holds by right her prey,  
 But offers terms for his release to Heaven,  
 Accept the chance ; thou canst no more obtain. 290  
 Send through the world thy messengers ; entreat  
 All living and unliving things to weep  
 For Balder ; if thou haply thus may'st melt  
 Hela, and win the loved one back to Heaven.”

She spake, and on her face let fall her veil,

**Frea's  
counsel  
followed** And bow'd her head, and sate with folded hands.  
 Nor did the all-ruling Odin slight her word ;  
 Straightway he spake, and thus address'd the Gods :  
 " Go quickly forth through all the world, and  
 pray

All living and unliving things to weep                            300  
 Balder, if haply he may thus be won."

When the Gods heard, they straight arose, and  
 took

Their horses, and rode forth through all the world ;  
 North, south, east, west, they struck, and roam'd  
 the world

Entreating all things to weep Balder's death.  
 And all that lived, and all without life, wept.  
 And as in winter, when the frost breaks up,  
 At winter's end, before the spring begins,  
 And a warm west-wind blows, and thaw sets in—  
 After an hour a dripping sound is heard                            310  
 In all the forests, and the soft-strewn snow  
 Under the trees is dibbled thick with holes,  
 And from the boughs the snowloads shuffle down ;  
 And, in fields sloping to the south, dark plots  
 Of grass peep out amid surrounding snow,  
 And widen, and the peasant's heart is glad—  
 So through the world was heard a dripping noise  
 Of all things weeping to bring Balder back ;  
 And there fell joy upon the Gods to hear.

But Hermod rode with Niord, whom he took                    320  
 To show him spits and beaches of the sea  
 Far off, where some unwarn'd night fail to weep—  
 Niord, the God of storms, whom fishers know ;  
 Not born in Heaven ; he was in Vanheim rear'd,  
 With men, but lives a hostage with the Gods ;  
 He knows each frith, and every rocky creek

Fringed with dark pines, and sands where seafowl  
scream—

All things  
weep save  
Thok

They two scour'd every coast, and all things wept.  
And they rode home together, through the wood  
Of Jarnvid, which to east of Midgard lies      330  
Bordering the giants, where the trees are iron';  
There in the wood before a cave they came,  
Where sate, in the cave's mouth, a skinny hag,  
Toothless and old ; she gibes the passers by.  
Thok is she call'd, but now Lok wore her shape ;  
She greeted them the first, and laugh'd, and  
said :—

“ Ye Gods, good lack, is it so dull in Heaven,  
That ye come pleasuring to Thok's iron wood ?  
Lovers of change ye are, fastidious sprites.  
Look, as in some boor's yard a sweet-breath'd cow,  
Whose manger is stuff'd full of good fresh hay, 341  
Snuffs at it daintily, and stoops her head  
To chew the straw, her litter, at her feet—  
So ye grow squeamish, Gods, and sniff at Heaven ! ”

She spake ; but Hermod answer'd her and  
said :—

“ Thok, not for gibes we come, we come for tears.  
Balder is dead, and Hela holds her prey,  
But will restore, if all things give him tears.  
Begrudge not thine ! to all was Balder dear.”

Then, with a louder laugh, the hag replied : —  
“ Is Balder dead ? and do ye come for tears ? 351  
Thok with dry eyes will weep o'er Balder's pyre.  
Weep him all other things, if weep they will—  
I weep him not ! let Hela keep her prey.”

She spake, and to the cavern's depth she fled,  
Mocking ; and Hermod knew their toil was vain.  
And as seafaring men, who long have wrought

Hermod  
visits Hell  
again

In the great deep for gain, at last come home,  
And towards evening see the headlands rise  
Of their dear country, and can plain descry' 360  
A fire of wither'd furze which boys have lit  
Upon the cliffs, or smoke of burning weeds  
Out of a till'd field inland ;—then the wind  
Catches them, and drives out again to sea ;  
And they go long days tossing up and down  
Over the grey sea-ridges, and the glimpse  
Of port they had makes bitterer far their toil—  
So the Gods' cross was bitterer for their joy.

Then, sad at heart, to Niord Hermod spake :—  
“ It is the accuser Lok, who flouts us all ! 370  
Ride back, and tell in Heaven this heavy news ;  
I must again below, to Hela's realm.”

He spoke ; and Niord set forth back to Heaven.  
But northward Hermod rode, the way below,  
The way he knew ; and traversed Giall's stream,  
And down to Ocean groped, and cross'd the ice,  
And came beneath the wall, and found the grate  
Still lifted ; well was his return foreknown.

And once more Hermod saw around him spread  
The joyless plains, and heard the streams of Hell.  
But as he enter'd, on the extremest bound 381  
Of Niflheim, he saw one ghost come near,  
Hovering, and stopping oft, as if afraid—  
Hoder, the unhappy, whom his own hand slew.  
And Hermod look'd, and knew his brother's ghost,  
And call'd him by his name, and sternly said :—

“ Hoder, ill-fated, blind in heart and eyes !  
Why tarriest thou to plunge thee in the gulph  
Of the deep inner gloom, but flittest here,  
In twilight, on the lonely verge of Hell, 390  
Far from the other ghosts, and Hela's throne ?

Doubtless thou fearest to meet Balder's voice,  
Thy brother, whom through folly thou didst slay.” Hoder's  
woe

He spoke ; but Hoder answer'd him, and said :—  
“ Hermod the nimble, dost thou still pursue  
The unhappy with reproach, even in the grave ?  
For this I died, and fled beneath the gloom,  
Not daily to endure abhorring Gods,  
Nor with a hateful presence cumber Heaven ;  
And canst thou not, even here, pass pitying by ? 403  
No less than Balder have I lost the light  
Of Heaven, and communion with my kin ;  
I too had once a wife, and once a child,  
And substance, and a golden house in Heaven—  
But all I left of my own act, and fled  
Below, and dost thou hate me even here ?  
Balder upbraids me not, nor hates at all,  
Though he has cause, have any cause ; but he,  
When that with downcast looks I hither came, 409  
Stretch'd forth his hand, and with benignant voice,  
*Welcome*, he said, *if there be welcome here,*  
*Brother and fellow-sport of Lok with me !*  
And not to offend thee, Hermod, nor to force  
My hated converse on thee, came I up  
From the deep gloom, where I will now return ;  
But earnestly I long'd to hover near,  
Not too far off, when that thou camest by ;  
To feel the presence of a brother God,  
And hear the passage of a horse of Heaven, 419  
For the last time—for here thou com'st no more.”

He spake, and turn'd to go to the inner gloom.  
But Hermod stay'd him with mild words, and  
said :—

“ Thou doest well to chide me, Hoder blind !  
Truly thou say'st, the planning guilty mind

Balder  
and Nanna  
together

Was Lok's ; the unwitting hand alone was thine.  
But Gods are like the sons of men in this—  
When they have woe, they blame the nearest cause.  
Howbeit stay, and be appeased ! and tell :  
Sits Balder still in pomp by Hela's side,  
Or is he mingled with the unnumber'd dead ? ” 430

And the blind Hoder answer'd him and spake :—  
“ His place of state remains by Hela's side,  
But empty ; for his wife, for Nanna came  
Lately below, and join'd him ; and the pair  
Frequent the still recesses of the realm  
Of Hela, and hold converse undisturb'd.  
But they too, doubtless, will have breathed the  
balm,

Which floats before a visitant from Heaven,  
And have drawn upward to this verge of Hell.”

He spoke ; and, as he ceased, a puff of wind 440  
Roll'd heavily the leaden mist aside  
Round where they stood, and they beheld two  
forms

Make toward them o'er the stretching cloudy plain.  
And Hermod straight perceived them, who they  
were

Balder and Nanna ; and to Balder said :—

“ Balder, too truly thou foresaw'st a snare !  
Lok triumphs still, and Hela keeps her prey.  
No more to Asgard shalt thou come, nor lodge  
In thy own house, Breidablik, nor enjoy  
The love all bear toward thee, nor train up 450  
Forset, thy son, to be beloved like thee.  
Here must thou lie, and wait an endless age.  
Therefore for the last time, O Balder, hail ! ”

He spoke ; and Balder answer'd him, and  
said :—

“ Hail and farewell ! for here thou com’st no more.      *Ave  
atque vale*  
 Yet mourn not for me, Hermod, when thou sitt’st      *atque vale*  
 In Heaven, nor let the other Gods lament,  
 As wholly to be pitied, quite forlorn.  
 For Nanna hath rejoin’d me, who, of old,  
 In Heaven, was seldom parted from my side ;      460  
 And still the acceptance follows me, which crown’d  
 My former life, and cheers me even here.  
 The iron frown of Hela is relax’d  
 When I draw nigh, and the wan tribes of dead  
 Love me, and gladly bring for my award  
 Their ineffectual feuds and feeble hates—  
 Shadows of hates, but they distress them still.”

And the fleet-footed Hermod made reply :—  
 “ Thou hast then all the solace death allows,  
 Esteem and function ; and so far is well.      470  
 Yet here thou liest, Balder, underground,  
 Rusting for ever ; and the years roll on,  
 The generations pass, the ages grow,  
 And bring us nearer to the final day  
 When from the south shall march the fiery band  
 And cross the bridge of Heaven, with Lok for  
 guide,  
 And Fenris at his heel with broken chain ;  
 While from the east the giant Rymer steers  
 His ship, and the great serpent makes to land ;  
 And all are marshall’d in one flaming square      480  
 Against the Gods, upon the plains of Heaven,  
 I mourn thee, that thou canst not help us then.”

He spake ; but Balder answer’d him, and  
 said :—

“ Mourn not for me ! Mourn, Hermod, for the  
 Gods ;  
 Mourn for the men on earth, the Gods in Heaven,

Dusk of Who live, and with their eyes shall see that day !  
 the Gods The day will come, when fall shall Asgard's  
 towers,

And Odin, and his sons, the seed of Heaven ;  
 But what were I, to save them in that hour ? 419  
 If strength might save them, could not Odin save,  
 My father, and his pride, the warrior Thor,  
 Vidar the silent, the impetuous Tyr ?  
 I, what were I, when these can nought avail ?  
 Yet, doubtless, when the day of battle comes,  
 And the two hosts are marshall'd, and in Heaven  
 The golden-crested cock shall sound alarm,  
 And his black brother-bird from hence reply,  
 And bucklers clash, and spears begin to pour—  
 Longing will stir within my breast, though vain  
 But not to me so grievous, as, I know, 500  
 To other Gods it were, is my enforced  
 Absence from fields where I could nothing aid ;  
 For I am long since weary of your storm  
 Of carnage, and find, Hermod, in your life  
 Something too much of war and broils, which  
 make

Life one perpetual fight, a bath of blood.  
 Mine eyes are dizzy with the arrowy hail ;  
 Mine ears are stunn'd with blows, and sick for  
 calm.

Inactive therefore let me lie, in gloom,  
 Unarm'd, inglorious ; I attend the course 510  
 Of ages, and my late return to light,  
 In times less alien to a spirit mild,  
 In new-recover'd seats, the happier day."

He spoke ; and the fleet Hermod thus re-  
 plied :—

" Brother, what seats are these, what happier day ?

Tell me, that I may ponder it when gone.” A new Heaven!

And the ray-crowned Balder answer’d him :—  
 “ Far to the south, beyond the blue, there spreads  
 Another Heaven, the boundless—no one yet  
 Hath reach’d it ; there hereafter shall arise      520  
 The second Asgard, with another name.

Thither, when o’er this present earth and Heavens  
 The tempest of the latter days hath swept,  
 And they from sight have disappear’d, and sunk,  
 Shall a small remnant of the Gods repair ;  
 Hoder and I shall join them from the grave.

There re-assembling we shall see emerge  
 From the bright Ocean at our feet an earth  
 More fresh, more verdant than the last, with fruits  
 Self-springing, and a seed of man preserved,      530  
 Who then shall live in peace, as now in war.

But we in Heaven shall find again with joy  
 The ruin’d palaces of Odin, seats  
 Familiar, halls where we have supp’d of old ;  
 Re-enter them with wonder, never fill  
 Our eyes with gazing, and rebuild with tears.  
 And we shall tread once more the well-known plain  
 Of Ida, and among the grass shall find  
 The golden dice wherewith we play’d of yore ;  
 And that will bring to mind the former life      540  
 And pastime of the Gods, the wise discourse  
 Of Odin, the delights of other days.

O Hermod, pray that thou may’st join us then !  
 Such for the future is my hope ; meanwhile,  
 I rest the thrall of Hela, and endure  
 Death, and the gloom which round me even now  
 Thickens, and to its inner gulph recalls.  
 Farewell, for longer speech is not allow’d ! ”

He spoke, and waved farewell, and gave his hand

Hermod      To Nanna ; and she gave their brother blind      550  
 seeks  
 Heaven  
 sorrowing      Her hand, in turn, for guidance ; and the three  
                  Departed o'er the cloudy plain, and soon  
                  Faded from sight into the interior gloom.  
                  But Hermod stood beside his drooping horse,  
                  Mute, gazing after them in tears ; and fain,  
                  Fain had he follow'd their receding steps,  
                  Though they to death were bound, and he to  
                  Heaven,  
                  Then ; but a power he could not break withheld.  
                  And as a stork which idle boys have trapp'd,  
                  And tied him in a yard, at autumn sees      560  
                  Flocks of his kind pass flying o'er his head  
                  To warmer lands, and coasts that keep the sun ;—  
                  He strains to join their flight, and from his shed  
                  Follows them with a long complaining cry—  
                  So Hermod gazed, and yearn'd to join his kin.

At last he sigh'd, and set forth back to Heaven.

## TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

### I. TRISTRAM

#### TRISTRAM

Is she not come ? The messenger was sure.  
 Prop me upon the pillows once again—  
 Raise me, my page : this cannot long endure.  
 Christ ! what a night ! how the sleet whips the  
                  pane !  
 What lights will those out to the northward be ?

THE PAGE

The lanterns of the fishing-boats at sea.

Tristram's  
sickness

TRISTRAM

Soft—who is that stands by the dying fire?

THE PAGE

Iseult.

TRISTRAM

Ah! not the Iseult I desire.

\* \* \* \*

What knight is this, so weak and pale,  
 Though the locks are yet brown on his noble head,  
     Propt on pillows in his bed,                  11  
     Gazing seawards for the light  
     Of some ship that sights the gale  
     On this wild December night?  
     Over the sick man's feet is spread  
     A dark green forest dress.  
     A gold harp leans against the bed,  
     Ruddy in the fire's light.  
     I know him by his harp of gold,  
     Famous in Arthur's court of old:  
     I know him by his forest dress.  
     The peerless hunter, harper, knight—  
     Tristram of Lyoness.

20

What lady is this whose silk attire  
 Gleams so rich in the light of the fire?  
     The ringlets on her shoulders lying  
     In their flitting lustre vying  
     With the clasp of burnish'd gold  
     Which her heavy robe doth hold.

**Isault of  
Brittany  
standing by**

Her looks are mild, her fingers slight  
As the driven snow are white ;  
And her cheeks are sunk and pale.  
Is it that the bleak sea-gale  
Beating from the Atlantic sea  
On this coast of Brittany,  
Nips too keenly the sweet Flower ?  
Is it that a deep fatigue  
Hath come on her, a chilly fear,  
Passing all her youthful hour  
Spinning with her maidens here,  
Listlessly through the window bars  
Gazing seawards many a league  
From her lonely shore-built tower,  
While the knights are at the wars ?  
Or, perhaps, has her young heart  
Felt already some deeper smart,  
Of those that in secret the heart-strings rive,  
Leaving her sunk and pale, though fair ?—  
Who is this Snowdrop by the sea ?  
I know her by her mildness rare,  
Her snow-white hands, her golden hair ;  
I know her by her rich silk dress,  
And her fragile loveliness—  
The sweetest Christian soul alive,  
Is cult of Brittany.

Iseult of Brittany?—but where  
Is that other Iseult fair,  
That proud, first Iseult, Cornwall's queen?  
She, whom Tristram's ship of yore  
From Ireland to Cornwall bore,  
To Tyntagel, to the side  
Of King Marc, to be his bride?

She who, as they voyaged, quaff'd  
 With Tristram that spiced magic draught,  
 Which since then for ever rolls  
 Through their blood, and binds their souls,  
 Working love, but working teen?—  
 There were two Iseults who did sway  
 Each her hour of Tristram's day;  
 But one possess'd his waning time,  
 The other his resplendent prime.  
 Behold her here, the patient Flower,  
 Who possess'd his darker hour!  
 Iseult of the Snow-White Hand  
 Watches pale by Tristram's bed.  
 She is here who had his gloom,  
 Where art thou who hadst his bloom?  
 One such kiss as those of yore  
 Might thy dying knight restore!  
 Does the love-draught work no more?  
 Art thou cold, or false, or dead,  
 Iseult of Ireland?

Where is  
Iseult of  
Ireland?

70

80

90

\*       \*       \*       \*

Loud howls the wind, sharp patters the rain,  
 And the knight sinks back on his pillows again:  
 He is weak with fever and pain,  
 And his spirit is not clear:  
 Hark! he mutters in his sleep,  
 As he wanders far from here,  
 Changes place and time of year,  
 And his closed eye doth sweep  
 O'er some fair unwintry sea,  
 Not this fierce Atlantic deep,  
 As he mutters brokenly—

Tristram  
dreams

## TRISTRAM

The calm sea shines, loose hang the vessel's sails—  
 Before us are the sweet green fields of Wales,  
 And overhead the cloudless sky of May.—  
 “ Ah, would I were in those green fields at play,  
 Not pent on ship-board this delicious day.  
 Tristram, I pray thee, of thy courtesy,  
 Reach me my golden cup that stands by thee, 100  
 And pledge me in it first for courtesy.—”  
 —Ha! dost thou start? are thy lips blanch'd like  
 mine?  
 Child, 'tis no water this, 'tis poison'd wine!  
 Iseult! . . . .

\* \* \* \*

Ah, sweet angels, let him dream!  
 Keep his eyelids! let him seem  
 Not this fever-wasted wight  
 Thinn'd and paled before his time,  
 But the brilliant youthful knight 110  
 In the glory of his prime,  
 Sitting in the gilded barge,  
 At thy side, thou lovely charge!  
 Bending gaily o'er thy hand,  
 Iseult of Ireland!  
 And she too, that princess fair,  
 If her bloom be now less rare,  
 Let her have her youth again—  
 Let her be as she was then!  
 Let her have her proud dark eyes,  
 And her petulant quick replies, 120  
 Let her sweep her dazzling hand  
 With its gesture of command,

And shake back her raven hair  
With the old imperious air.  
As of old, so let her be,  
That first Iseult, princess bright,  
Chatting with her youthful knight  
As he steers her o'er the sea,  
Quitting at her father's will  
The green isle where she was bred,      130  
And her bower in Ireland,  
For the surge-beat Cornish strand,  
Where the prince whom she must wed  
Dwells on proud Tyntagel's hill,  
Fast beside the sounding sea.  
And that golden cup her mother  
Gave her, that her future lord,  
Gave her that King Marc and she  
Might drink it on their marriage day,  
And for ever love each other,      140  
Let her, as she sits on board,  
Ah, sweet saints, unwittingly,  
See it shine, and take it up,  
And to Tristram laughing say—  
“Sir Tristram, of thy courtesy  
Pledge me in my golden cup!”  
Let them drink it—let their hands  
Tremble, and their cheeks be flame,  
As they feel the fatal bands  
Of a love they dare not name,      150  
With a wild delicious pain,  
Twine about their hearts again.  
Let the early summer be  
Once more round them, and the sea  
Blue, and o'er its mirror kind  
Let the breath of the May wind,

The  
voyage to  
Cornwall

Of this  
be his  
dream!

Wandering through their drooping sails,  
Die on the green fields of Wales.  
Let a dream like this restore  
What his eye must see no more.

160

## TRISTRAM

Chill blows the wind, the pleasaunce walks are  
drear.

Madcap, what jest was this, to meet me here?  
Were feet like those made for so wild a way?  
The southern winter-parlour, by my fay,  
Had been the likeliest trysting place to-day.  
“Tristram!—nay, nay—thou must not take my  
hand—

Tristram—sweet love—we are betray’d—out-  
plann’d.

Fly—save thyself—save me. I dare not stay.”—  
One last kiss first!—“ ‘Tis vain—to horse—away! ”

\* \* \* \*

Ah, sweet saints, his dream doth move      170  
Faster surely than it should,  
From the fever in his blood.  
All the spring-time of his love  
Is already gone and past,  
And instead thereof is seen  
Its winter, which endureth still—  
Tyntagel on its surge-beat hill,  
The pleasaunce walks, the weeping queen,  
The flying leaves, the straining blast,  
And that long, wild kiss—their last.      180

And this rough December night  
 And his burning fever pain  
 Mingle with his hurrying dream  
 Till they rule it, till he seem  
 The press'd fugitive again,  
 The love-desperate banish'd knight  
 With a fire in his brain  
 Flying o'er the stormy main.

Dream of  
his young  
bride

- Whither does he wander now ?

Haply in his dreams the wind  
 Wafts him here, and lets him find  
 The lovely Orphan Child again  
 In her castle by the coast,  
 The youngest, fairest chatelaine,  
 That this realm of France can boast,  
 Our Snowdrop by the Atlantic sea,  
 Iseult of Brittany.

190

And—for through the haggard air,  
 The stain'd arms, the matted hair  
 Of that stranger knight ill-starr'd,  
 There gleam'd something that recall'd  
 The Tristram who in better days  
 Was Launcelot's guest at Joyous Gard—  
 Welcomed here, and here install'd,  
 Tended of his fever here,  
 Haply he seems again to move  
 His young guardian's heart with love ;  
 In his exiled loneliness,  
 In his stately deep distress,  
 Without a word, without a tear.—

200

Ah, 'tis well he should retrace  
 His tranquil life in this lone place ;  
 His gentle bearing at the side  
 Of his timid youthful bride ;

210

Dreams  
of idleness  
and battle

His long rambles by the shore  
 On winter evenings, when the roar  
 Of the near waves came, sadly grand,  
 Through the dark, up the drown'd sand :  
 Or his endless reveries  
 In the woods, where the gleams play      220  
 On the grass under the trees,  
 Passing the long summer's day  
 Idle as a mossy stone  
 In the forest depths alone ;  
 The chase neglected, and his hound  
 Couch'd beside him on the ground.—  
 Ah, what trouble's on his brow ?  
 Hither let him wander now,  
 Hither, to the quiet hours  
 Pass'd among these heaths of ours      230  
 By the grey Atlantic sea.  
 Hours, if not of ecstasy,  
 From violent anguish surely free.

## TRISTRAM

All red with blood the whirling river flows,  
 The wide plain rings, the dazed air throbs with  
 blows.  
 Upon us are the chivalry of Rome—  
 Their spears are down, their steeds are bathed in  
 foam.  
 “Up, Tristram, up,” men cry, “thou moonstruck  
 knight !”  
 What foul fiend rides thee ? On into the fight !”—  
 Above the din her voice is in my ears—      240  
 I see her form glide through the crossing spears.—  
 Iseult ! . . . .



Ah, he wanders forth again ;  
 We cannot keep him ; now as then  
 There 's a secret in his breast  
 That will never let him rest.  
 These musing fits in the green wood  
 They cloud the brain, they dull the blood.  
 His sword is sharp—his horse is good—  
 Beyond the mountains will he see      250  
 The famous towns of Italy,  
 And label with the blessed sign  
 'The heathen Saxons on the Rhine.  
 At Arthur's side he fights once more  
 With the Roman Emperor.  
 There 's many a gay knight where he goes  
 Will help him to forget his care.  
 The march—the leaguer—Heaven's blithe  
 air—  
 The neighing steeds—the ringing blows ;  
 Sick pining comes not where these are.      260  
 Ah, what boots it, that the jest  
 Lightens every other brow,  
 What, that every other breast  
 Dances as the trumpets blow,  
 If one's own heart beats not light  
 • In the waves of the toss'd fight,  
 If oneself can not get free  
 From the clog of misery ?  
 Thy lovely youthful Wife grows pale  
 Watching by the salt sea tide      270  
 With her children at her side  
 For the gleam of thy white sail.  
 Home, Tristram, to thy halls again !  
 To our lonely sea complain,  
 To our forests tell thy pain.

A secret  
woe

Sick to  
death

## TRISTRAM

All round the forest sweeps off, black in shade,  
But it is moonlight in the open glade :  
And in the bottom of the glade shine clear  
The forest chapel and the fountain near.  
I think, I have a fever in my blood :                   280  
Come, let me leave the shadow of this wood,  
Ride down, and bathe my hot brow in the flood.  
Mild shines the cold spring in the moon's clear light.  
God ! 'tis *her* face plays in the waters bright.—  
“ Fair love,” she says, “ canst thou forget so soon,  
At this soft hour, under this sweet moon ? ”  
Iseult ! . . .

\*         \*         \*         \*

Ah poor soul, if this be so,  
Only death can balm thy woe.  
The solitudes of the green wood                   290  
Had no medicine for thy mood.  
The rushing battle clear'd thy blood  
As little as did solitude.  
—Ah, his eyelids slowly break  
Their hot seals, and let him wake.  
What new change shall we now see ?  
A happier ? Worse it cannot be.

## TRISTRAM

Is my page here ? Come, turn me to the fire.  
Upon the window panes the moon shines bright ;  
The wind is down : but she 'll not come to-night.  
Ah no—she is asleep in Cornwall now,                   301  
Far hence—her dreams are fair—smooth is her brow.

Of me she recks not, nor my vain desire.  
 I have had dreams, I have had dreams, my page, <sup>His wife's love</sup>  
 Would take a score years from a strong man's age,  
 And with a blood like mine, will leave, I fear,  
 Scant leisure for a second messenger.  
 My princess, art thou there? Sweet, 'tis too late.  
 To bed, and sleep: my fever is gone by:  
 To-night my page shall keep me company. <sup>310</sup>  
 Where do the children sleep? kiss them for me  
 Poor child, thou art almost as pale as I:  
 This comes of nursing long and watching late.  
 To bed—good-night!

\* \* \*

She left the gleam-lit fireplace,  
 She came to the bed-side.  
 She took his hands in hers: her tears  
 Down on her slender fingers rain'd.  
 She raised her eyes upon his face—  
 Not with a look of wounded pride, <sup>320</sup>  
 A look as if the heart complain'd:—  
 Her look was like a sad embrace;  
 The gaze of one who can divine  
 A grief, and sympathise.  
 Sweet Flower, thy children's eyes  
 Are not more innocent than thine.  
 But they sleep in shelter'd rest,  
 Like helpless birds in the warm nest,  
 On the Castle's southern side;  
 Where feebly comes the mournful roar <sup>330</sup>  
 Of buffeting wind and surging tide  
 Through many a room and corridor.  
 Full on their window the moon's ray

Their  
sleeping  
children

Makes their chamber as bright as day ;  
 It shines upon the blank white walls  
 And on the snowy pillow falls,  
 And on two angel-heads doth play  
 Turn'd to each other—the eyes closed—  
 The lashes on the cheeks repos'd  
 Round each sweet brow the cap close-set 340  
 Hardly lets peep the golden hair ;  
 Through the soft-open'd lips the air  
 Scarcely moves the coverlet.  
 One little wandering arm is thrown  
 At random on the counterpane,  
 And often the finger's close in haste  
 As if their baby owner chased  
 The butterflies again.  
 This stir they have and this alone ;  
 But else they are so still. 350  
 Ah, tired madcaps, you lie still.  
 But were you at the window now  
 To look forth on the fairy sight  
 Of your illumin'd haunts by night ;  
 To see the park-glades where you play  
 Far lovelier than they are by day ;  
 To see the sparkle on the eaves,  
 And upon every giant bough  
 Of those old oaks, whose wet red leaves  
 Are jewell'd with bright drops of rain— 360  
 How would your voices run again !  
 And far beyond the sparkling trees  
 Of the castle park one sees  
 The bare heaths spreading, clear as day,  
 Moor behind moor, far, far away,  
 Into the heart of Brittany.  
 And here and there, lock'd by the land,

Long inlets of smooth glittering sea,  
And many a stretch of watery sand  
All shining in the white moon-beams.  
But you see fairer in your dreams.

Queen  
Iseult  
comes

370

What voices are these on the clear night air?  
What lights in the court? what steps on the stair?

## 2. ISEULT OF IRELAND

### TRISTRAM

Raise the light, my page, that I may see her.—  
Thou art come at last then, haughty Queen!  
Long I've waited, long I've fought my fever:  
Late thou comest, cruel thou hast been.

### ISEULT

Blame me not, poor sufferer, that I tarried:  
I was bound, I could not break the band.  
Chide not with the past, but feel the present:  
I am here—we meet—I hold thy hand.

### TRISTRAM

Thou art come, indeed—thou hast rejoin'd me;  
Thou hast dared it: but too late to save.      10  
Fear not now that men should tax thy honour.  
I am dying: build—(thou may'st)—my grave!

### ISEULT

Tristram, for the love of Heaven, speak kindly!  
What, I hear these bitter words from thee?  
Sick with grief I am, and faint with travel—  
Take my hand—dear Tristram, look on me!

**She will  
tend him**

**TRISTRAM**

I forgot, thou comest from thy voyage.  
 Yes, the spray is on thy cloak and hair.  
 But thy dark eyes are not dimm'd, proud Iseult !  
 And thy beauty never was more fair. 20

**ISEULT**

Ah, harsh flatterer ! let alone my beauty.  
 I, like thee, have left my youth afar.  
 Take my hand, and touch these wasted fingers--  
 See my cheek and lips, how white they are.

**TRISTRAM**

Thou art paler :—but thy sweet charm, Iseult !  
 Would not fade with the dull years away.  
 Ah, how fair thou standest in the moonlight !  
 I forgive thee, Iseult !—thou wilt stay ?

Fear me not, I will be always with thee ;  
 I will watch thee, tend thee, soothe thy pain ; 30  
 Sing thee tales of true long-parted lovers  
 Join'd at evening of their days again.

No, thou shalt not speak ; I should be finding  
 Something alter'd in thy courtly tone.  
 Sit—sit by me : I will think, we've lived so  
 In the greenwood, all our lives, alone.

ISEULT

A faded  
watcher!

Alter'd, Tristram? Not in courts, believe me,  
 Love like mine is alter'd in the breast.  
 Courtly life is light and cannot reach it.  
 Ah, it lives, because so deep suppress'd.

40

Royal state with Marc, my deep-wrong'd husband—  
 That was bliss to make my sorrows flee!  
 Silken courtiers whispering honied nothings—  
 Those were friends to make me false to thee!

What, thou think'st men speak in courtly chambers  
 Words by which the wretched are consoled?  
 What, thou think'st this aching brow was cooler,  
 Circled, Tristram, by a band of gold?

Ah, on which, if both our lots were balanced,  
 Was indeed the heaviest burden thrown,  
 Thee, a weeping exile in thy forest—  
 Me, a smiling queen upon my throne?

50

Vain and strange debate, where both have suffer'd;  
 Both have pass'd a youth constrain'd and sad;  
 Both have brought their anxious day to evening,  
 And have now short space for being glad.

Join'd we are henceforth: nor will thy people,  
 Nor thy younger Iseult take it ill  
 That an ancient rival shares her office,  
 When she sees her humbled, pale, and still.

60

I, a faded watcher by thy pillow,  
 I, a statue on thy chapel floor,

118      TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

Tristram Pour'd in grief before the Virgin Mother,  
child of sorrow Rouse no anger, make no rivals more.

She will cry—"Is this the form I dreaded?  
This his idol? this that royal bride?  
Ah, an hour of health would purge his eyesight:  
Stay, pale queen! for ever by my side."

Hush, no words! that smile, I see, forgives me.  
I am now thy nurse, I bid thee sleep.      70  
Close thine eyes—this flooding moonlight blinds  
them—  
Nay, all's well again: thou must not weep.

TRISTRAM

I am happy: yet I feel, there's something  
Swells my heart, and takes my breath away:  
Through a mist I see thee: near!—come nearer!  
Bend—bend down—I yet have much to say.

ISEULT

Heaven! his head sinks back upon the pillow!—  
Tristram! Tristram! let thy heart not fail.  
Call on God and on the holy angels!  
What, love, courage!—Christ! he is so pale.      80

TRISTRAM

Hush, 'tis vain, I feel my end approaching.  
This is what my mother said should be,  
When the fierce pains took her in the forest,  
The deep draughts of death, in bearing me.

"Son," she said, "thy name shall be of sorrow!  
Tristram art thou call'd for my death's sake!"

So she said, and died in the drear forest.  
Grief since then his home with me doth make.

Death

I am dying.—Start not, nor look wildly!  
Me, thy living friend, thou canst not save.      90  
But, since living we were ununited,  
Go not far, O Iseult! from my grave.

Rise, go hence, and seek the princess Iseult:  
Speak her fair, she is of royal blood.  
Say, I charged her, that ye live together:—  
She will grant it—she is kind and good.

Now to sail the seas of Death and leave thee;  
One last kiss upon the living shore!

Tristram!—Tristram!—stay—receive me with  
thee!  
Iseult leaves thee, Tristram! never more.      100

\*       \*       \*       \*

You see them clear: the moon shines bright.  
Slow—slow and softly, where she stood,  
She sinks upon the ground: her hood  
Had fallen back: her arms outspread  
Still hold her lover's hands: her head  
Is bow'd, half-buried, on the bed.  
O'er the blanch'd sheet her raven hair  
Lies in disorder'd streams; and there,  
Strung like white stars, the pearls still are,  
And the golden bracelets heavy and rare      110  
Flash on her white arms still.

**The  
restless  
ghost of  
Tyntagel** The very same which yesternight  
Flash'd in the silver sconces' light,  
When the feast was gay and the laughter loud  
In Tyntagel's palace proud.

But then they deck'd a restless ghost  
With hot-flush'd cheeks and brilliant eyes  
And quivering lips on which the tide  
Of courtly speech abruptly died,  
And a glance that over the crowded floor,  
The dancers, and the festive host,  
Flew ever to the door.

That the knights eyed her in surprise,  
And the dames whisper'd scoffingly—  
“ Her moods, good lack, they pass like showers !  
But yesternight and she would be  
As pale and still as wither'd flowers,  
And now to-night she laughs and speaks  
And has a colour in her cheeks.  
Christ keep us from such fantasy ! ”—

120

130

The air of the December night  
Steals coldly around the chamber bright,  
Where those lifeless lovers be ;  
Swinging with it, in the light  
Flaps the ghostlike tapestry.  
And on the arras wrought you see  
A stately Huntsman, clad in green,  
And round him a fresh forest-scene.  
On that clear forest-knoll he stays,  
With his pack round him, and delays.  
He stares and stares, with troubled face,  
At this huge, gleam-lit fireplace,  
At that bright, iron-figured door,  
And those blown rushes on the floor.

140

He gazes down into the room  
 With heated cheeks and flurried air,  
 And to himself he seems to say—  
*“What place is this, and who are they?*  
*Who is that kneeling Lady fair?*  
*And on his pillows that pale Knight*  
*Who seems of marble on a tomb?*  
*How comes it here, this chamber bright,*  
*Through whose mullion'd windows clear*  
*The castle-court all wet with rain,*  
*The drawbridge and the moat appear,*  
*And then the beach, and, mark'd with spray,*  
*The sunken reefs, and far away*  
*The unquiet bright Atlantic plain?*  
*--What, has some glamour made me sleep,*  
*And sent me with my dogs to sweep,*  
*By night, with boisterous bugle-peal,*  
*Through some old, sea-side, knightly hall,*  
*Not in the free green wood at all?*  
*That Knight's asleep, and at her prayer*  
*That Lady by the bed doth kneel:*  
*'Then hush, thou boisterous bugle-peal!'*  
 The wild boar rustles in his lair—  
 The fierce hounds snuff the tainted air—  
 But lord and hounds keep rooted there.  
 Cheer, cheer thy dogs into the brake,  
 O Hunter! and without a fear  
 Thy golden-tassell'd bugle blow,  
 And through the glades thy pastime take—  
 For thou wilt rouse no sleepers here!  
 For these thou seest are unmoved;  
 Cold, cold as those who lived and loved  
 A thousand years ago.

The  
tapestry  
huntsman  
seems to  
speak

150

160

170

Widow-  
hood

## 3. ISEULT OF BRITTANY

A YEAR had flown, and o'er the sea away,  
 In Cornwall, Tristram and queen Iseult lay ;  
 In King Marc's chapel, in Tyntagel old ;  
 There in a ship they bore those lovers cold.  
 The young surviving Iseult, one bright day,  
 Had wander'd forth : her children were at play  
 In a green circular hollow in the heath  
 Which borders the seashore ; a country path  
 Creeps over it from the till'd fields behind.  
 The hollow's grassy banks are soft inclined,      10  
 And to one standing on them, far and near  
 The lone unbroken view spreads bright and clear  
 Over the waste :—This cirque of open ground  
 Is light and green ; the heather, which all round  
 Creeps thickly, grows not here ; but the pale grass  
 Is strewn with rocks, and many a shiver'd mass  
 Of vein'd white-gleaming quartz, and here and there  
 Dotted with holly trees and juniper.  
 In the smooth centre of the opening stood  
 Three hollies side by side, and made a screen      20  
 Warm with the winter sun, of burnish'd green,  
 With scarlet berries gemm'd, the fell-fare's food.  
 Under the glittering hollies Iseult stands  
 Watching her children play : their little hands  
 Are busy gathering spars of quartz, and streams  
 Of stag-horn for their hats : anon, with screams  
 Of mad delight they drop their spoils, and bound  
 Among the holly clumps and broken ground,  
 Racing full speed, and startling in their rush  
 The fell-fares and the speckled missel-thrush      30  
 Out of their glossy coverts : but when now  
 Their cheeks were flush'd, and over each hot brow

Under the feather'd hats of the sweet pair  
 In blinding masses shower'd the golden hair—  
 Then Iseult call'd them to her, and the three  
 Cluster'd under the holly screen, and she  
 Told them an old-world Breton history.

Tristran &  
orphans

Warm in their mantles wrapt, the three stood  
 there,  
 Under the hollies, in the clear still air—  
 Mantles with those rich furs deep glistering 40  
 Which Venice ships do from swart Egypt bring.  
 Long they staid still—then, pacing at their ease,  
 Moved up and down under the glossy trees ;  
 But still as they pursued their warm dry road  
 From Iseult's lips the unbroken story flow'd,  
 And still the children listen'd, their blue eycs  
 Fix'd on their mother's face in wide surprise ;  
 Nor did their looks stray once to the sea-side,  
 Nor to the brown heaths round them, bright and  
 wide,  
 Nor to the snow which, though 'twas all away 50  
 From the open heath, still by the hedgerows lay,  
 Nor to the shining sea-fowl that with screams  
 Bore up from where the bright Atlantic gleams,  
 Swooping to landward ; nor to where, quite clear,  
 The fell-fares settled on the thickets near.  
 And they would still have listen'd, till dark night  
 Came keen and chill down on the heather bright ;  
 But, when the red glow on the sea grew cold,  
 And the grey turrets of the castle old 59  
 Look'd sternly through the frosty evening air,—  
 Then Iseult took by the hand those children fair,  
 And brought her tale to an end, and found the path,  
 And led them home over the darkening heath.

**A joyless  
young  
mother** And is she happy? Does she see unmoved  
 The days in which she might have lived and loved  
 Slip without bringing bliss slowly away,  
 One after one, to-morrow like to-day?  
 Joy has not found her yet, nor ever will:—  
 Is it this thought that makes her mien so still, 69  
 Her features so fatigued, her eyes, though sweet,  
 So sunk, so rarely lifted save to meet  
 Her children's? She moves slow: her voice  
 alone  
 Has yet an infantine and silver tone,  
 But even that comes languidly: in truth,  
 She seems one dying in a mask of youth.  
 And now she will go home, and softly lay  
 Her laughing children in their beds, and play  
 Awhile with them before they sleep; and then  
 She'll light her silver lamp, which fishermen 79  
 Dragging their nets through the rough waves, afar,  
 Along this iron coast, know like a star,  
 And take her broidery frame, and there she'll sit  
 Hour after hour, her gold curls sweeping it,  
 Lifting her soft-bent head only to mind  
 Her children, or to listen to the wind.  
 And when the clock peals midnight, she will move  
 Her work away, and let her fingers rove  
 Across the shaggy brows of Tristram's hound  
 Who lies, guarding her feet, along the ground:  
 Or else she will fall musing, her blue eyes 90  
 Fix'd, her slight hands clasp'd on her lap; then rise,  
 And at her prie-dieu kneel, until she have told  
 Her rosary beads of ebony tipp'd with gold,  
 Then to her soft sleep: and to-morrow 'll be  
 To-day's exact repeated effigy.

Yes, it is lonely for her in her hall.  
 The children, and the grey-hair'd seneschal,  
 Her women, and Sir Tristram's aged hound,  
 Are there the sole companions to be found.  
 But these she loves ; and noisier life than this   100  
 She would find ill to bear, weak as she is :  
 She has her children too, and night and day  
 Is with them ; and the wide heaths where they  
     play,  
 The hollies, and the cliff, and the sea-shore,  
 The sand, the sea-birds, and the distant sails,  
 These are to her dear as to them : the tales  
 With which this day the children she beguil'd  
 She glean'd from Breton grandames when a child  
 In every hut along this sea-coast wild.         109  
 She herself loves them still, and, when they are told,  
 Can forget all to hear them, as of old.

The  
furnace  
of the  
world

Dear saints, it is not sorrow, as I hear,  
 Not suffering, that shuts up eye and ear  
 To all which has delighted them before,  
 And lets us be what we were once no more.  
 No : we may suffer deeply, yet retain  
 Power to be moved and sooth'd, for all our pain,\*  
 By what of old pleased us, and will again.  
 No : 'tis the gradual furnace of the world,  
 In whose hot air our spirits are upcurl'd         120  
 Until they crumble, or else grow like steel--  
 Which kills in us the bloom, the youth, the  
     spring—  
 Which leaves the fierce necessity to feel,  
 But takes away the power—this can avail,  
 By drying up our joy in everything,  
 To make our former pleasures all seem stale.

This fool  
passion This, or some tyrannous single thought, some fit  
Of passion, which subdues our souls to it,  
Till for its sake alone we live and move—  
Call it ambition, or remorse, or love— 130  
This too can change us wholly, and make seem  
All that we did before, shadow and dream.

And yet, I swear, it angers me to see  
How this fool passion gulls men potently ;  
Being in truth but a diseased unrest  
And an unnatural overheat at best.  
How they are full of languor and distress  
Not having it ; which when they do possess  
They straightway are burnt up with fume and care,  
And spend their lives in posting here and there 140  
Where this plague drives them ; and have little  
ease,  
Are fretful with themselves and hard to please.  
Like that bold Cæsar, the famed Roman wight,  
Who wept at reading of a Grecian knight  
Who made a name at younger years than he :  
Or that renown'd mirror of chivalry,  
Prince Alexander, Philip's peerless son,  
Who carried the great war from Macedon  
Into the Soudan's realm, and thunder'd on  
To die at thirty-five in Babylon. 150

What tale did Iseult to the children say,  
Under the hollies, that bright winter's day ?

She told them of the fairy-haunted land  
Away the other side of Brittany,  
Beyond the heaths, edged by the lonely sea ;  
Of the deep forest-glades of Broce-liande,

Through whose green boughs the golden sunshine  
creeps,

Iseult's  
tale of  
Merlin

Where Merlin by the enchanted thorn-tree sleeps.

For here he came with the fay Vivian,

One April, when the warm days first began ; 160

He was on foot, and that false fay, his friend,

On her white palfrey : here he met his end,  
In these lone sylvan glades, that April day.

This tale of Merlin and the lovely fay

Was the one Iseult chose, and she brought clear  
Before the children's fancy him and her.

Blowing between the stems the forest air  
Had loosen'd the brown curls of Vivian's hair,  
Which play'd on her flush'd cheek, and her blue  
eyes

Sparkled with mocking glee and exercise. 170

Her palfrey's flanks were mired and bathed in  
sweat,

For they had travell'd far and not stopp'd yet.

A briar in that tangled wilderness

Had scored her white right hand, which she  
allows

To rest ungloved on her green riding-dress ;

The other warded off the drooping boughs.

But still she chatted on, with her blue eyes

Fix'd full on Merlin's face, her stately prize :

Her 'haviour had the morning's fresh clear grace,

The spirit of the woods was in her face ; 180

She look'd so witching fair, that learned wight

Forgot his craft, and his best wits took flight,

And he grew fond, and eager to obey

His mistress, use her empire as she may.

Vivian's  
triumph

They came to where the brushwood ceased, and  
day

Peer'd 'twixt the stems ; and the ground broke  
away

In a sloped sward down to a brawling brook,  
And up as high as where they stood to look  
On the brook's further side was clear ; but then  
The underwood and trees began again.      190

This open glen was studded thick with thorns  
Then white with blossom ; and you saw the horns,  
Through the green fern, of the shy fallow-deer  
Which come at noon down to the water here.

You saw the bright-eyed squirrels dart along  
Under the thorns on the green sward ; and strong  
The blackbird whistled from the dingles near,  
And the light chipping of the woodpecker  
Rang lonely and sharp : the sky was fair,      199  
And a fresh breath of spring stirr'd everywhere.

Merlin and Vivian stopp'd on the slope's brow  
To gaze on the green sea of leaf and bough  
Which glistening lay all round them, lone and mild,  
As if to itself the quiet forest smiled.

Upon the brow-top grew a thorn ; and here      \*

The grass was dry and moss'd, and you saw clear  
Across the hollow : white anemones  
Starr'd the cool turf, and clumps of primroses  
Ran out from the dark underwood behind.

No fairer resting-place a man could find.      210

"Here let us halt," said Merlin then ; and she  
Nodded, and tied her palfrey to a tree.

They sate them down together, and a sleep  
Fell upon Merlin, more like death, so deep.  
Her finger on her lips, then Vivian rose,

And from her brown-lock'd head the wimple  
throws,

*A sleep till  
judgment-  
day*

And takes it in her hand, and waves it over  
The blossom'd thorn-tree and her sleeping lover.  
Nine times she waved the fluttering wimple round,  
And made a little plot of magic ground.      220  
And in that daisied circle, as men say,  
Is Merlin prisoner till the judgment-day,  
But she herself whither she will can rove,  
For she was passing weary of his love.

## THE NECKAN

IN summer, on the headlands,  
The Baltic Sea along,  
Sits Neckan with his harp of gold,  
And sings his plaintive song.

Green rolls beneath the headlands,  
Green rolls the Baltic Sea,  
And there, below the Neckan's feet,  
His wife and children be.

He sings not of the ocean,  
Its shells and roses pale.      10  
Of earth, of earth the Neckan sings;  
He hath no other tale.

He sits upon the headlands,  
And sings a mournful stave  
Of all he saw and felt on earth,  
Far from the green sea wave.

His sorrow

Sings how, a knight, he wander'd  
 By castle, field, and town.—  
 But earthly knights have harder hearts  
 Than the Sea Children own.

20

Sings of his earthly bridal—  
 Priests, knights, and ladies gay.  
 “And who art thou,” the priest began,  
 “Sir Knight, who wedd’st to-day?”—

“I am no knight,” he answer’d ;  
 “From the sea waves I come.”—  
 The knights drew sword, the ladies scream’d,  
 The surpliced priest stood dumb.

He sings how from the chapel  
 He vanish’d with his bride,  
 And bore her down to the sea halls,  
 Beneath the salt sea tide.

30

He sings how she sits weeping  
 ’Mid shells that round her lie.  
 “False Neckan shares my bed,” she weeps ;  
 “No Christian mate have I.”

He sings how through the billows  
 He rose to earth again,  
 And sought a priest to sign the cross,  
 That Neckan Heaven might gain.

40

He sings how, on an evening,  
 Beneath the birch trees cool,  
 He sate and play’d his harp of gold,  
 Beside the river pool.

Pe-side the pool sate Neckan—  
 Tears fill'd his cold blue eye.  
 On his white mule, across the bridge,  
 A cassock'd priest rode by.

The  
priestly  
ban

“ Why sitt'st thou there, O Neckan,  
 And play'st thy harp of gold ?  
 Sooner shall this my staff bear leaves,  
 Than thou shalt Heaven behold.”

50

The cassock'd priest rode onwards,  
 And vanish'd with his mule.  
 And Neckan in the twilight grey  
 Wept by the river pool.

In summer, on the headlands,  
 The Baltic Sea along,  
 Sits Neckan with his harp of gold,  
 And sings this plaintive song.

60

## THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

COME, dear children, let us away ;  
 Down and away below.  
 Now my brothers call from the bay ;  
 Now the great winds shorewards blow ;  
 Now the salt tides seawards flow ;  
 Now the wild white horses play,  
 Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.  
 Children dear, let us away.  
 This way, this way.

A wild  
despair

Call her once before you go.  
Call once yet.  
In a voice that she will know :  
“ Margaret ! Margaret ! ”  
Children’s voices should be dear  
(Call once more) to a mother’s ear :  
Children’s voices, wild with pain  
Surely she will come again.  
Call her once and come away.  
This way, this way.  
“ Mother dear, we cannot stay.”  
The wild white horses foam and fret.  
Margaret ! Margaret !

10

20

Come, dear children, come away down.  
Call no more.  
One last look at the white-wall’d town,  
And the little grey church on the windy shore.  
Then come down.  
She will not comie though you call all day.  
Come away, come away.

Children dear, was it yesterday  
We heard the sweet bells over the bay ?  
In the caverns where we lay,  
Through the surf and through the swell  
The far-off sound of a silver bell ?  
Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,  
Where the winds are all asleep ;  
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam ;  
Where the salt weed sways in the stream ;  
Where the sea-beasts ranged all round  
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground ;

30

40

Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,  
 Dry their mail and bask in the brine ;  
 Where great whales come sailing by,  
 Sail and sail, with unshut eye,  
 Round the world for ever and aye ?

In the  
heart of  
the sea

When did music come this way ?  
 Children dear, was it yesterday ?

Children dear, was it yesterday  
 (Call yet once) that she went away ?  
 Once she sate with you and me,                   50  
 On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea,  
 And the youngest sate on her knee.

She comb'd its bright hair, and she tended it well,  
 When down swung the sound of the far-off bell.  
 She sigh'd, she look'd up through the clear green  
 sea.

She said ; " I must go, for my kinsfolk pray  
 In the little grey church on the shore to-day.  
 'Twill be Easter-time in the world—ah me !  
 And I lose my poor soul, Merman, here with thee." 60  
 I said ; " Go up, dear heart, through the waves.  
 Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-  
 caves."

She smiled, she went up through the surf in the  
 bay.

Children dear, was it yesterday ?

Children dear, were we long alone ?  
 " The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.  
 Long prayers," I said, " in the world they say.  
 Come," I said, and we rose through the surf in  
 the bay.

The We went up the beach, by the sandy down  
 Little ones Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-wall'd  
 moan town.

Through the narrow paved streets, where all was  
 still,

70

To the little grey church on the windy hill.

From the church came a murmur of folk at their  
 prayers,

But we stood without in the cold blowing airs.

We climb'd on the graves, on the stones, worn  
 with rains,

And we gazed up the aisle through the small  
 leaded panes.

She sate by the pillar ; we saw her clear :

" Margaret, hist ! come quick, we are here.

Dear heart," I said, " we are long alone.

The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan."

But, ah, she gave me never a look,

80

For her eyes were seal'd to the holy book.

Loud prays the priest ; shut stands the door.

Come away, children, call no more.

Come away, come down, call no more.

Down, down, down.

Down to the depths of the sea.

She sits at her wheel in the humming town,

Singing most joyfully.

Hark, what she sings ; " O joy, O joy,

89

For the humming street, and the child with its toy.

For the priest, and the bell, and the holy well.

For the wheel where I spun,

And the blessed light of the sun."

And so she sings her fill,

Singing most joyfully,

Till the shuttle falls from her hand,  
And the whizzing wheel stands still.

Margaret  
in the  
town

She steals to the window, and looks at the sand ;  
And over the sand at the sea ;  
And her eyes are set in a stare ;  
And anon there breaks a sigh,  
And anon there drops a tear,  
From a sorrow-clouded eye,  
And a heart sorrow-laden,  
A long, long sigh.

For the cold strange eyes of a little Mermaiden,  
And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away children.  
Come children, come down.  
The salt tide rolls seaward.  
Lights shine in the town.  
She will start from her slumber  
When gusts shake the door ;  
She will hear the winds howling,  
Will hear the waves roar.  
We shall see, while above us  
The waves roar and whirl,  
A ceiling of amber,  
A pavement of pearl.  
Singing, "Here came a mortal,  
But faithless was she.  
And alone dwell for ever  
The kings of the sea."

110

120

But, children, at midnight,  
When soft the winds blow ;  
When clear falls the moonlight ;  
When spring-tides are low :

Faithless  
and cruel

When sweet airs come seaward  
From heaths starr'd with broom ;  
And high rocks throw mildly      130  
On the blanch'd sands a gloom :  
Up the still, glistening beaches,  
Up the creeks we will hie ;  
Over banks of bright seaweed  
The ebb-tide leaves dry.  
We will gaze, from the sand-hills,  
At the white, sleeping town ;  
At the church on the hill-side---  
And then come back down.  
Singing, "There dwells a loved one,      140  
But cruel is she.  
She left lonely for ever  
The kings of the sea."

# ELEGIAC POEMS



## THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

Go, for they call you, Shepherd, from the hill ;  
Go, Shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes :  
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,  
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,  
Nor the cropp'd grasses shoot another head.

But when the fields are still,  
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,  
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen  
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanch'd  
green ;  
Come, Shepherd, and again renew the quest.

*An August pastoral scene*

Here, where the reaper was at work of late, 11  
In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves  
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruse,  
And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,  
Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to  
use ;  
Here will I sit and wait,  
While to my ear from uplands far away  
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne ;  
With distant cries of reapers in the corn—  
All the live murmur of a summer's day. 2c

Screen'd is this nook o'er the high, half-reap'd field,  
And here till sun-down, Shepherd, will I be.  
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep

Oxford  
towers and  
Glanvil's  
book

And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see  
 Pale blue convolvulus in tendrils creep :  
 And air-swept lindens yield  
 Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed  
 showers  
 Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,  
 And bower me from the August sun with shade ;  
 And the eye travels down to Oxford's  
 towers : 30

And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book—  
 Come, let me read the oft-read tale again,  
 The story of that Oxford scholar poor  
 Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain,  
 Who, tired of knocking at Preferment's door,  
 One summer morn forsook  
 His friends, and went to learn the Gipsy lore,  
 And roam'd the world with that wild brother-  
 hood,  
 And came, as most men deem'd, to little good,  
 But came to Oxford and his friends no  
 more. 40

But once, years after, in the country lanes,  
 Two scholars whom at college erst he knew  
 Met him, and of his way of life enquired.  
 Whereat he answer'd, that the Gipsy crew,  
 His mates, had arts to rule as they desired  
 The workings of men's brains ;  
 And they can bind them to what thoughts they  
 will :  
 “ And I,” he said, “ the secret of their art,  
 When fully learn'd, will to the world impart :  
 But it needs happy moments for this skill.”

This said, he left them, and return'd no more,  
 But rumours hung about the country side      52      Berkshire  
moors and  
Cumner  
hills  
     That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,  
 Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,  
     In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,  
     The same the Gipsies wore.  
 Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in spring :  
     At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,  
     On the warm ingle bench, the smock-frock'd  
     boors  
     Had found him seated at their entering. 60

But, mid their drink and clatter, he would fly :  
     And I myself seem half to know thy looks,  
     And put the shepherds, Wanderer, on thy  
     trace ;  
 And boys who in lone wheatsfields scare the rooks  
     I ask if thou hast pass'd their quiet place ;  
     Or in my boat I lie  
 Moor'd to the cool bank in the summer heats,  
     Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine  
     fills,  
 And watch the warm green-muffled Cumner  
     hills,  
     And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy  
     retreats.      70

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground.  
 Thee, at the ferry, Oxford riders blithe,  
     Returning home on summer nights, have met  
 Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-lock-hithe,  
     Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,  
     As the slow punt swings round :

Glanvil's  
scholar  
still alive?

And leaning backwards in a pensive dream,  
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers  
Pluck'd in shy fields and distant woodland  
bowers,  
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit  
stream.

80

And then they land, and thou art seen no more.  
Maidens who from the distant hamlets come  
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,  
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee  
roam,  
Or cross a stile into the public way.  
Oft thou hast given them store  
Of flowers—the frail-leaf'd, white anemone—  
Dark bluebells drench'd with dews of summer  
eves—  
And purple orchises with spotted leaves— 89  
But none has words she can report of thee.

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay-time's here  
In Junc, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,  
Men who through those wide fields of breezy  
grass  
Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the glitter-  
ing Thames,  
To bathe in the abandon'd lasher pass,  
Have often pass'd thee near  
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown:  
Mark'd thy outlandish garb, thy figure spare,  
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air;  
But, when they came from bathing, thou  
wert gone. 100

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,  
 Where at her open door the housewife darns,  
 Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate  
 To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.  
 Children, who early range these slopes and late  
 For cresses from the rills,  
 Have known thee watching, all an April day,  
 The springing pastures and the feeding kine ;  
 And mark'd thee, when the stars come out  
 and shine,  
 Through the long dewy grass move slow

Bagley  
wood--a  
poet's mood

In Autumn, on the skirts of Bagley wood,  
 Where most the Gipsies by the turf-edged way  
 Pitch their smoked tents, and every bush you  
 see  
 With scarlet patches tagg'd and shreds of grey,  
 Above the forest ground call'd Thessaly—  
 The blackbird picking food  
 Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all ;  
 So often has he known thee past him stray  
 Rapt, twirling in thy hand a wither'd spray,  
 And waiting for the spark from Heaven  
 to fall.

120

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill  
 Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers  
 go,  
 Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden bridge  
 Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,  
 Thy face towards Hinksey and its wintry  
 ridge ?  
 And thou hast climb'd the hill

**Alive  
or dead?**

And gain'd the white brow of the Cumner range,  
 Turn'd once to watch, while thick the snow-  
 flakes fall,  
 The line of festal light in Christ-Church hall—  
 Then sought thy straw in some sequester'd  
 grange.

130

But what—I dream ! Two hundred years are flown  
 Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,  
 And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe  
 That thou wert wander'd from the studious walls  
 To learn strange arts, and join a Gipsy tribe :  
 And thou from earth art gone  
 Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid ;  
 Some country nook, where o'er thy unknown  
 grave  
 Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave—  
 Under a dark red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours. 141  
 For what wears out the life of mortal men ?

'Tis that from change to change their being  
 rolls :

'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,  
 Exhaust the energy of strongest souls,  
 And numb the elastic powers.

Till having used our nerves with bliss and teen,  
 And tired upon a thousand schemes our wit,  
 To the just-pausing Genius we remit  
 Our worn-out life, and are—what we have  
 been.

150

\*  
 Thou hast not lived, why should'st thou perish, so ?  
 Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire :

Else wert thou long since number'd with the <sup>The spark  
from  
Heaven</sup> dead—

Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire.

The generations of thy peers are fled,

And we ourselves shall go ;

But thou possessest an immortal lot,

And we imagine thee exempt from age

And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page,

Because thou hadst—what we, alas, have  
not.

160

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers

Fresh, undiverted to the world without,

Firm to their mark, not spent on other things ;

Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,

Which much to have tried, in much been  
baffled, brings.

O Life unlike to ours !

Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,

Of whom each strives, nor knows for what  
he strives,

And each half lives a hundred different lives ;

Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in  
hope.

170

Thou waitest for the spark from Heaven : and we,

Light half-believers of our casual creeds,

Who never deeply felt, nor clearly will'd,

Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,

Whose vague resolves never have been fulfill'd :

For whom each year we see

Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new ;

Who hesitate and falter life away,

And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day—

Ah, do not we, Wanderer, await it too ? 180

**Our wisest'** Yes, we await it, but it still delays,  
 And then we suffer ; and amongst us One,  
     Who most has suffer'd, takes dejectedly  
 His seat upon the intellectual throne ;  
     And all his store of sad experience he  
         Lays bare of wretched days ;  
 Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,  
     And how the dying spark of hope was fed,  
     And how the breast was sooth'd, and how the  
         head,  
     And all his hourly varied anodynes.      190

This for our wisest : and we others pine,  
 And wish the long unhappy dream would end,  
     And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear  
 With close-lipp'd Patience for our only friend,  
     Sad Patience, too near neighbour to Despair :  
         But none has hope like thine.  
 Thou through the fields and through the woods  
         dost stray,  
 Roaming the country side, a truant boy,  
     Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,      199  
         And every doubt long blown by time away.

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,  
 And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames :  
 Before this strange disease of modern life,  
 With its sick hurry, its divided aims,  
     Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts, was rife —  
         Fly hence, our contact fear !  
 Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood !  
 Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern  
     From her false friend's approach in Hades turn,  
         Wave us away, and keep thy solitude.      210

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,  
Still clutching the inviolable shade,  
With a free onward impulse brushing through,  
By night, the silver'd branches of the glade—  
Far on the forest skirts, where none pursue  
On some mild pastoral slope  
Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales,  
Freshen thy flowers, as in former years,  
With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,      219  
From the dark dingles, to the nightingales.

**Flee from  
modern  
contagion!**

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly !  
For strong the infection of our mental strife,  
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for  
rest ;  
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,  
Like us distracted, and like us unblest.  
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,  
Thy hopes grow timorous, and unsix'd thy  
powers,  
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting  
made :  
And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,  
Fade, and grow old at last and die like  
ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles !  
—As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,  
    Descried at sunrise an emerging prow  
Lifting the cool-hair'd creepers stealthily,  
    The fringes of a southward-facing brow  
        Among the Ægean isles :  
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,  
    Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,

The  
Tyrian's  
Flight

Words-  
worth's  
tomb

Green bursting figs, and tunnies steep'd in  
brine ; 239  
And knew the intruders on his ancient home,  
  
The young light-hearted Masters of the waves ;  
And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out more  
sail,  
And day and night held on indignantly  
O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,  
Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,  
To where the Atlantic raves  
Outside the Western Straits, and unbent sails  
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through  
sheets of foam,  
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come ; 249  
And on the beach undid his corded bales.

## MEMORIAL VERSES

APRIL, 1850.

GOETHE in Weimar sleeps, and Greece,  
Long since, saw Byron's struggle cease.  
But one such death remain'd to come.  
The last poetic verse is dumb.  
What shall be said o'er Wordsworth's tomb ?

When Byron's eyes were shut in death,  
We bow'd our head and held our breath.  
He taught us little : but our soul  
Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll.  
With shivering heart the strife we saw

Of passion with Eternal Law.  
 And yet with reverential awe  
 We watch'd the fount of fiery life  
 Which served for that Titanic strife.

Byron  
and Goethe

When Goethe's death was told, we said—  
 Sunk, then, is Europe's saggest head.  
 Physician of the Iron Age  
 Goethe has done his pilgrimage.  
 He took the suffering human race,  
 He read each wound, each weakness clear— 20  
 And struck his singer on the place  
 And said—Thou ailest here, and here.—  
 He look'd on Europe's dying hour  
 Of fitful dream and feverish power ;  
 His eye plunged down the weltering strife,  
 The turmoil of expiring life ;  
 He said—The end is everywhere :  
 Art still has truth, take refuge there.—  
 And he was happy, if to know  
 Causes of things, and far below 30  
 His feet to see the lurid flow  
 Of terror, and insane distress,  
 And headlong fate, be happiness.

And Wordsworth !—Ah, pale ghosts ! rejoice !  
 For never has such soothing voice  
 Been to your shadowy world convey'd,  
 Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade  
 Heard the clear song of Orpheus come  
 Through Hades, and the mournful gloom.  
 Wordsworth is gone from us—and ye, 40  
 Ah, may ye feel his voice as we.  
 He too upon the wintry clime

**Words.  
worth's  
healing  
power**

Had fallen—on this iron time  
 Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.  
 He found us when the age had bound  
 Our souls in its benumbing round :  
 He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears.  
 He laid us as we lay at birth  
 On the cool flowery lap of earth,  
 Smiles broke from us and we had ease ;  
 The hills were round us, and the breeze  
 Went o'er the sun-lit fields again ;  
 Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.  
 Our youth return'd ; for there was shed  
 On spirits that had long been dead,  
 Spirits dried up and closely furl'd,  
 The freshness of the early world.

50

Ah ! since dark days still bring to light  
 Man's prudence and man's fiery might,  
 Time may restore us in his course  
 Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force ;  
 But where will Europe's latter hour  
 Again find Wordsworth's healing power ?  
 Others will teach us how to dare,  
 And against fear our breast to steel ;  
 Others will strengthen us to bear—  
 But who, ah ! who, will make us feel ?  
 The cloud of mortal destiny,  
 Others will front it fearlessly—  
 But who, like him, will put it by ?

60

70

Keep fresh the grass upon his grave,  
 O Rotha, with thy living wave !  
 Sing him thy best ! for few or none  
 Hears thy voice right, now he is gone.

## STANZAS

IN MEMORY OF EDWARD QUILLINAN

I saw him sensitive in frame,  
I knew his spirits low ;  
And wish'd him health, success, and fame—  
I do not wish it now.

Sweet,  
generous,  
and  
humane

For these are all their own reward,  
And leave no good behind ;  
They try us, oftenest make us hard.  
Less modest, pure, and kind.

Alas ! yet to the suffering man,  
In this his mortal state,  
Friends could not give what fortune can—  
Health, ease, a heart elate.

10

But he is now by fortune foil'd  
No more ; and we retain  
The memory of a man unspoil'd,  
Sweet, generous, and humane—

With all the fortunate have not,  
With gentle voice and brow.  
—Alive, we would have changed his lot,  
We would not change it now.

20

C. Brontë  
and H.  
Martineau  
at Quilli-  
nan's house

## HAWORTH CHURCHYARD

APRIL, 1855

WHERE, under Loughrigg, the stream  
 Of Rotha sparkles through fields  
 Vested for ever with green,  
 Four years since, in the house  
 Of a gentle spirit, now dead—  
 Wordsworth's son-in-law, friend --  
 I saw the meeting of two  
 Gifted women. The one,  
 Brilliant with recent renown,  
 Young, unpractised, had told  
 With a master's accent her feign'd  
 Story of passionate life ;  
 The other, maturer in fame,  
 Earning, she too, her praise  
 First in fiction, had since  
 Widen'd her sweep, and survey'd  
 History, politics, mind.

10

The two held converse ; they wrote  
 In a book which of world-famous souls  
 Kept the memorial ;—bard,  
 Warrior, statesman, had sign'd  
 Their names ; chief glory of all,  
 Scott had bestow'd there his last  
 Breathings of song, with a pen  
 'Tottering, a death-stricken hand.

20

Hope at that meeting smiled fair.  
 Years in number, it seem'd,  
 Lay before both, and a fame  
 Heightened, and multiplied power.--  
 Behold ! The elder, to-day,  
 Lies expecting from death,  
 In mortal weakness, a last  
 Summons ! the younger is dead !

**Homage  
to living  
and dead**

30

First to the living we pay  
 Mournful homage ;—the Muse  
 Gains not an earth-deasen'd ear.

Hail to the steadfast soul,  
 Which, unflinching and keen,  
 Wrought to erase from its depth  
 Mist and illusion and fear !  
 Hail to the spirit which dared  
 Trust its own thoughts, before yet  
 Echoed her back by the crowd !  
 Hail to the courage which gave  
 Voice to its creed, ere the creed  
 Won consecration from time !

40

Turn we next to the dead.  
 —How shall we honour the young,  
 The ardent, the gifted ? how mourn ?  
 Console we cannot, her ear  
 Is deaf. Far northward from here,  
 In a churchyard high 'mid the moors  
 Of Yorkshire, a little earth  
 Stops it for ever to praise.

50

Where, behind Keighley, the road  
 Up to the heart of the moors

## The Brontë sisters' early death

Between heath-clad showery hills  
Runs, and colliers' carts  
Poach the deep ways coming down,  
And a rough, grimed race have their homes,  
There on its slope is built                          61  
The moorland town. But the church  
Stands on the crest of the hill,  
Lonely and bleak ;—at its side  
The parsonage-house and the graves.

Strew with laurel the grave  
Of the early-dying ! Alas,  
Early she goes on the path  
To the silent country, and leaves  
Half her laurels unwon,  
Dying too soon !—yet green  
Laurels she had, and a course  
Short, but redoubled by fame.

And not friendless, and not  
Only with strangers to meet,  
Faces ungreeting and cold,  
Thou, O mourn'd one, to-day  
Enterest the house of the grave !  
Those of thy blood, whom thou lov'dst,  
Have preceeded thee—young,  
Loving, a sisterly band ;  
Some in art, some in gift  
Inferior—all in fame.  
They, like friends, shall receive  
This comer, greet her with joy ;  
Welcome the sister, the friend ;  
Hear with delight of thy fame !

Round thee they lie—the grass  
 Blows from their graves to thy own !  
 She, whose genius, though not  
 Puissant like thine, was yet  
 Sweet and graceful ;—and she  
 (How shall I sing her ?) whose soul  
 Knew no fellow for might,  
 Passion, vehemence, grief,  
 Daring, since Byron died,  
 That world-famed son of fire—she, who sank  
 Baffled, unknown, self-consumed ;  
 Whose too bold dying song  
 Stirr'd, like a clarion-blast, my soul.

90

100

Emily's  
swan-song<sup>1</sup>  
Branwell

Of one, too, I have heard,  
 A brother—sleeps he here ?  
 Of all that gifted race  
 Not the least gifted ; young,  
 Unhappy, eloquent—the child  
 Of many hopes, of many tears.  
 O boy, if here thou sleep'st, sleep well !  
 On thee too did the Muse  
 Bright in thy cradle smile ;  
 But some dark shadow came  
 (I know not what) and interposed.

110

Sleep, O cluster of friends,  
 Sleep !—or only when May,  
 Brought by the west-wind, returns  
 Back to your native heaths,  
 And the plover is heard on the moors,  
 Yearly awake to behold  
 The opening summer, the sky,  
 The shining moorland —to hear,

Sleep!  
—  
The  
Alpine  
mule-track

The drowsy bee, as of old,  
Hum o'er the thyme, the grouse  
Call from the heather in bloom !  
Sleep, or only for this  
Break your united repose !

120

### STANZAS FROM THE GRANDE CHARTREUSE

THROUGH Alpine meadows soft-suffused  
With rain, where thick the crocus blows,  
Past the dark forges long disused,  
The mule-track from Saint Laurent goes.  
The bridge is cross'd, and slow we ride,  
Through forest, up the mountain-side.

The autumnal evening darkens round,  
The wind is up, and drives the rain ;  
While, hark ! far down, with strangled sound  
Doth the Dead Guier's stream complain      10  
Where that wet smoke, among the woods,  
Over his boiling caldron broods.

Swift rush the spectral vapours white  
Past limestone scars with rugged pines,  
Showing—then blotting from our sight !—  
Halt—through the cloud-drift something shines !  
High in the valley, wet and drear,  
The huts of Courrierie appear.

*Strike leftward!* cries our guide ; and higher  
 Mounts up the stony forest-way.  
 At last the encircling trees retire ;  
 Look ! through the showery twilight grey  
 What pointed roofs are these advance ?--  
 A palace of the Kings of France ?

A home  
20 of monks

Approach, for what we seek is here !  
 Alight, and sparingly sup, and wait  
 For rest in this outbuilding near ;  
 Then cross the sward and reach that gate.  
 Knock ; pass the wicket ! Thou art come  
 To the Carthusians' world-famed home.

30

The silent courts, where night and day  
 Into their stone-carved basins cold  
 The splashing icy fountains play—  
 The humid corridors behold !  
 Where, ghostlike in the deepening night,  
 Cowl'd forms brush by in gleaming white.

The chapel, where no organ's peal  
 Invests the stern and naked prayer—  
 With penitential cries they kneel  
 And wrestle ; rising then, with bare  
 And white uplifted faces stand,  
 Passing the Host from hand to hand ;

40

Each takes, and then his visage wan  
 Is buried in his cowl once more.  
 The cells !—the suffering Son of Man  
 Upon the wall—the knee-worn floor—  
 And where they sleep, that wooden bed,  
 Which shall their coffin be, when dead !

Their sole  
human  
task The library, where tract and tome  
Not to feed priestly pride are there,  
To hymn the conquering march of Rome,  
Nor yet to amuse, as ours are !  
They paint of souls the inner strife,  
Their drops of blood, their death in life.

50

The garden, overgrown—yet mild,  
See, fragrant herbs are flowering there !  
Strong children of the Alpine wild  
Whose culture is the brethren's care ;  
Of human tasks their only one,  
And cheerful works beneath the sun.

60

Those halls, too, destined to contain  
Each its own pilgrim-host of old,  
From England, Germany, or Spain --  
All are before me ! I behold  
The House, the Brotherhood austere !  
—And what am I, that I am here ?

For rigorous teachers seized my youth,  
And purged its faith, and trimm'd its fire,  
Show'd me the high, white star of Truth,  
There bade me gaze, and there aspire.  
Even now their whispers pierce the gloom :  
*What dost thou in this living tomb ?*

70

Forgive me, masters of the mind !  
At whose behest I long ago  
So much unlearnt, so much resign'd—  
I come not here to be your foe !  
I seek these anchorites, not in ruth,  
To curse and to deny your truth ;

Not as their friend, or child, I speak !  
 But as, on some far northern strand,  
 Thinking of his own Gods, a Greek  
 In pity and mournful awe might stand  
 Before some fallen Runic stone—  
 For both were faiths, and both are gone.

80      Between  
          two worlds

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,  
 The other powerless to be born,  
 With nowhere yet to rest my head,  
 Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.  
 Their faith, my tears, the world deride —  
 I come to shed them at their side.      90

Oh, hide me in your gloom profound,  
 Ye solemn seats of holy pain !  
 Take me, cowl'd forms, and fence me round,  
 Till I possess my soul again ;  
 Till free my thoughts before me roll,  
 Not chafed by hourly false control !

For the world cries your faith is now  
 But a dead time's exploded dream ;  
 My melancholy, sciolists say,  
 Is a pass'd mode, an outworn theme —  
 As if the world had ever had  
 A faith, or sciolists been sad      100

Ah, if it *be* pass'd, take away,  
 At least, the restlessness, the pain :  
 Be man henceforth no more a prey  
 To these out-dated stings again !  
 The nobleness of grief is gone —  
 Ah, leave us not the fret alone !

The  
pageant  
of a  
bleeding  
heart

But—if you cannot give us ease—  
Last of the race of them who grieve  
Here leave us to die out with these  
Last of the people who believe !  
Silent, while years engrave the brow :  
Silent—the best are silent now.

110

Achilles ponders in his tent,  
The kings of modern thought are dumb ;  
Silent they are, though not content,  
And wait to see the future come.  
They have the grief men had of yore,  
But they contend and cry no more.

120

Our fathers water'd with their tears  
This sea of time whereon we sail,  
Their voices were in all men's ears  
Who pass'd within their puissant hail.  
Still the same ocean round us raves,  
But we stand mute, and watch the waves.

For what avail'd it, all the noise  
And outcry of the former men ?—  
Say, have their sons achieved more joys,  
Say, is life lighter now than then ?  
The sufferers died, they left their pain—  
The pangs which tortured them remain.

130

What helps it now, that Byron bore,  
With haughty scorn which mock'd the smart,  
Through Europe to the Ætolian shore  
The pageant of his bleeding heart ?  
That thousands counted every groan,  
And Europe made his woe her own ?

What boots it, Shelley ! that the breeze  
 Carried thy lovely wail away,  
 Musical through Italian trees  
 Which fringe thy soft blue Spezzian bay ?  
 Inheritors of thy distress  
 Have restless hearts one throb the less ?

Shelley and  
"Ober-  
mann"

140

Or are we easier, to have read,  
 O Obermann ! the sad, stern page,  
 Which tells us how thou hidd'st thy head  
 From the fierce tempest of thine age  
 In the lone brakes of Fontainebleau,  
 Or chalets near the Alpine snow ?

150

Ye slumber in your silent grave !—  
 The world, which for an idle day  
 Grace to your mood of sadness gave,  
 Long since hath flung her weeds away.  
 The eternal trifler breaks your spell ;  
 But we—we learnt your lore too well !

Years hence, perhaps, may dawn an age,  
 More fortunate, alas ! than we,  
 Which without hardness will be sage,  
 And gay without frivolity.  
 Sons of the world, oh, speed those years ;  
 But, while we wait, allow our tears !

160

Allow them ! We admire with awe  
 The exulting thunder of your race ;  
 You give the universe your law,  
 You triumph over time and space !  
 Your pride of life, your tireless powers,  
 We laud them, but they are not ours.

The outer  
world

We are like children rear'd in shade  
 Beneath some old-world abbey wall,      170  
 Forgotten in a forest-glade,  
 And secret from the eyes of all.  
 Deep, deep the greenwood round them waves,  
 Their abbey, and its close of graves !

But, where the road runs near the stream,  
 Oft through the trees they catch a glance  
 Of passing troops in the sun's beam—  
 Pennon, and plume, and flashing lance !  
 Forth to the world those soldiers fare,  
 To life, to cities, and to war !      180

And through the wood, another way,  
 Faint bugle-notes from far are borne,  
 Where hunters gather, staghounds bay,  
 Round some fair forest-lodge at morn.  
 Gay dames are there, in sylvan green ;  
 Laughter and cries--those notes between !

The banners flashing through the trees  
 Make their blood dance and chain their eyes  
 That bugle-music on the breeze  
 Arrests them with a charm'd surprise.      190  
 Banner by turns and bugle woo :  
*Ye shy recluses, follow too !*

O children, what do ye reply ?—  
 “ Action and pleasure, will ye roam  
 Through these secluded dells to cry  
 And call us ?—but too late ye come !  
 Too late for us your call ye blow,  
 Whose bent was taken long ago.

" Long since we pace this shadow'd nave ;  
We watch those yellow tapers shine,  
Emblems of hope over the grave,  
In the high altar's depth divine ;  
The organ carries to our ear  
Its accents of another sphere.

200      Peace in  
             the desert  
             Senancour

" Fenced early in this cloistral round  
Of reverie, of shade, of prayer,  
How should we grow in other ground ?  
How can we flower in foreign air ?  
—Pass, banners, pass, and bugles, cease ;  
And leave our desert to its peace ! "

210

## STANZAS IN MEMORY OF THE AUTHOR OF "OBERMANN"

[ÉTIENNE PIVERT DE SENANCOUR]

In front the awful Alpine track  
Crawls up its rocky stair ;  
The autumn storm-winds drive the rack,  
Close o'er it, in the air.

Behind are the abandon'd baths  
Mute in their meadows lone ;  
The leaves are on the valley paths ;  
The mists are on the Rhone—

A wounded  
human  
spirit

The white mists rolling like a sea.  
I hear the torrents roar.  
—Yes, Obermann, all speaks of thee !  
I feel thee near once more.

10

I turn thy leaves : I feel their breath  
Once more upon me roll ;  
That air of languor, cold, and death,  
Which brooded o'er thy soul.

Fly hence, poor Wretch, whoe'er thou art,  
Condemn'd to cast about,  
All shipwreck in thy own weak heart,  
For comfort from without :

20

A fever in these pages burns  
Beneath the calm they feign ;  
A wounded human spirit turns  
Here on its bed of pain.

Yes, though the virgin mountain air  
Fresh through these pages blows,  
Though to these leaves the glaciers spare  
The soul of their mute snows,

'Though here a mountain murmur swells  
Of many a dark-bough'd pine,  
Though, as you read, you hear the bells  
Of the high-pasturing kine—

30

Yet, through the hum of torrent lone,  
And brooding mountain bee,  
There sobs I know not what ground tone  
Of human agony.

Is it for this, because the sound  
Is fraught too deep with pain,  
That, Obermann ! the world around  
So little loves thy strain ?

Words-  
worth and  
Goethe

40

Some secrets may the poet tell,  
For the world loves new ways.  
To tell too deep ones is not well ;  
It knows not what he says.

Yet of the spirits who have reign'd  
In this our troubled day,  
I know but two, who have attain'd,  
Save thee, to see their way.

By England's lakes, in grey old age,  
His quiet home one keeps ;<sup>1</sup>  
And one, the strong much-toiling Sage,  
In German Weimar sleeps.

50

But Wordsworth's eyes avert their ken  
From half of human fate ;  
And Goethe's course few sons of man  
May think to emulate.

For he pursued a lonely road,  
His eye on nature's plan ;  
Neither made man too much a God,  
Nor God too much a man.

60

Strong was he, with a spirit free  
From mists, and sane, and clear ;  
Clearer, how much ! than ours : yet we  
Have a worse course to steer.

<sup>1</sup> Written in November, 1849. \*

Die also  
thou !

For though his manhood bore the blast  
Of a tremendous time,  
Yet in a tranquil world was pass'd  
His tenderer youthful prime

But we, brought forth and rear'd in hours  
Of change, alarm, surprise—  
What shelter to grow ripe is ours?  
What leisure to grow wise?

70

Like children bathing on the shore,  
Buried a wave beneath,  
The second wave succeeds, before  
We have had time to breathe.

Too fast we live, too much are tried,  
Too harass'd to attain  
Wordsworth's sweet calm, or Goethe's wide  
And luminous view to gain.

80

And then we turn, thou sadder sage!  
To thee: we feel thy spell.  
The hopeless tangle of our age—  
Thou too hast scann'd it well.

Immovable thou sittest; still  
As death; composed to bear.  
Thy head is clear, thy feeling chill—  
And icy thy despair.

Yes, as the Son of Thetis said,  
One hears thee saying now—  
"Greater by far than thou art dead:  
Strive not: die also thou."

90

Ah ! Two desires toss about  
The poet's feverish blood.  
One drives him to the world without,  
And one to solitude.

Senan-  
cour's  
pleasures

The glow of thought, the thrill of life—  
Where, where do these abound ?  
Not in the world, not in the strife  
Of men, shall they be found.

100

He who hath watch'd, nor shared, the strife,  
Knows how the day hath gone ;  
He only lives with the world's life  
Who hath renounced his own.

To thee we come, then. Clouds are roll'd  
Where thou, O Seer, art set ;  
Thy realm of thought is drear and cold—  
The world is colder yet !

And thou hast pleasures too to share  
With those who come to thee :  
Balms floating on thy mountain air,  
And healing sights to see.

How often, where the slopes are green  
On Jaman, hast thou sate  
By some high chalet door and seen  
The summer day grow late,

And darkness steal o'er the wet grass  
With the pale crocus starr'd,  
And reach that glimmering sheet of glass  
Beneath the piny sward,

120

**Choosing  
“the  
world”**

Lake Leman's waters, far below :  
And watch'd the rosy light  
Fade from the distant peaks of snow :  
And on the air of night

Heard accents of the eternal tongue  
Through the pine branches play :  
Listen'd, and felt thyself grow young ;  
Listen'd, and wept—Away !

Away the dreams that but deceive !  
And thou, sad Guide, adieu !  
I go ; Fate drives me : but I leave  
Half of my life with you.

130

We, in some unknown Power's employ,  
Move on a rigorous line :  
Can neither, when we will, enjoy ;  
Nor, when we will, resign.

I in the world must live :—but thou,  
Thy melancholy Shade !  
Wilt not, if thou can't see me now,  
Condemn me, nor upbraid.

140

For thou art gone away from earth,  
And place with those dost claim,  
The Children of the Second Birth  
Whom the world could not tame ;

And with that small transfigured Band,  
Whom many a different way  
Conducted to their common land,  
Thou learn'st to think as they.

148

Christian and pagan, king and slave,  
Soldier and anchorite,  
Distinctions we esteem so grave,  
Are nothing in their sight.

Senan  
cour's  
grave

They do not ask, who pined unseen,  
Who was on action hurl'd,  
Whose one bond is, that all have been  
Unspotted by the world.

There without anger thou wilt see  
Him who obeys thy spell  
No more, so he but rest, like thee,  
Unsoil'd . . . and so, Farewell !

160

Farewell !—Whether thou now liest near  
That much-loved inland sea,  
The ripples of whose blue waves cheer  
Vevey and Meillerie,

And in that gracious region bland,  
Where with clear-rustling wave  
The scented pines of Switzerland  
Stand dark round thy green grave,

Between the dusty vineyard walls  
Issuing on that green place,  
The early peasant still recalls  
The pensive stranger's face,

170

And stoops to clear thy moss-grown date  
Ere he plods on again :  
Or whether, by maligner fate,  
Among the swarms of men,

**Farewell!**

Where between granite terraces  
The Seine conducts her wave  
The Capital of Pleasure sees  
Thy hardly heard of grave—

180

Farewell! Under the sky we part,  
In this stern Alpine dell.  
**O unstrung will! O broken heart!**  
**A last, a last farewell!**

# **LYRIC POEMS**

## SWITZERLAND

### 1. MEETING

AGAIN I see my bliss at hand,  
The town, the lake are here ;  
My Marguerite smiles upon the strand,  
Unalter'd with the year.

Marguerite  
of the  
kisses

I know that graceful figure fair,  
That cheek of languid hue ;  
I know that soft enkerchief'd hair,  
And those sweet eyes of blue.

Again I spring to make my choice ;  
Again in tones of ire  
I hear a God's tremendous voice—  
“ Be counsell'd, and retire.”

10

Ye guiding Powers who join and part,  
What would ye have with me ?  
Ah, warn some more ambitious heart,  
And let the peaceful be !

### 2. PARTING

Ye storm-winds of Autumn !  
Who rush by, who shake  
The window, and ruffle  
The gleam-lighted lake ;

## Mar- guerite's voice and figure

Who cross to the hill-side  
Thin-sprinkled with farms,  
Where the high woods strip sadly  
Their yellowing arms—  
Ye are bound for the mountains !  
Ah ! with you let me go  
Where your cold, distant barrier,  
The vast range of snow,  
Through the loose clouds lifts dimly  
Its white peaks in air—  
How deep is their stillness !  
Ah, would I were there !

10

But on the stairs what voice is this I hear,  
Buoyant as morning, and as morning clear?  
Say, has some wet bird-haunted English lawn  
Lent it the music of its trees at dawn?  
Or was it from some sun-fleck'd mountain-brook  
That the sweet voice its upland clearness took?  
Ah! it comes nearer—  
Sweet notes, this way!

20

Hark ! fast by the window  
The rushing winds go,  
To the ice-cumber'd gorges,  
The vast seas of snow !  
There the torrents drive upward  
Their rock-strangled hum ;  
There the avalanche thunders  
The hoarse torrent dumb.  
—I come, O ye mountains !  
Ye torrents, I come !

39

But who is this, by the half-open'd door,  
 Whose figure casts a shadow on the floor ?  
 The sweet blue eyes—the soft, ash-colour'd hair--  
 The cheeks that still their gentle paleness wear—  
 The lovely lips, with their arch smile that tells  
 The unconquer'd joy in which her spirit dwells— 40  
 Ah ! they bend nearer—  
 Sweet lips, this way !

Her  
eyes, hair,  
and lips

Hark ! The wind rushes past us !  
 Ah ! with that let me go  
 To the clear waning hill-side  
 Unspotted by snow,  
 There to watch, o'er the sunk vale,  
 'The frore mountain-wall,  
 Where the niched snow-bed sprays down  
 Its powdery fall.  
 There its dusky blue clusters  
 The aconite spreads ;  
 There the pines slope, the cloud-strips  
 Hung soft in their heads.  
 No life but, at moments,  
 The mountain-bee's hum.  
 —I come, O ye mountains !  
 Ye pine-woods, I come !

50

Forgive me ! forgive me !  
 Ah, Marguerite, fain  
 Would these arms reach to clasp thce !  
 But see ! 'tis in vain.

60

In the void air, towards thee,  
 My stretch'd arms are cast ;

**Her past  
and his**

But a sea rolls between us  
Our different past !

To the lips, ah ! of others  
Those lips have been prest,  
And others, ere I was,  
Were clasp'd to that breast ;

70

Far, far from each other  
Our spirits have grown ;  
And what heart knows another ?  
Ah ! who knows his own ?

Blow, ye winds ! lift me with you !  
I come to the wild.  
Fold closely, O Nature !  
Thine arms round thy child.

To thee only God granted  
A heart ever new—  
To all always open,  
To all always true.

80

Ah ! calm me, restore me ;  
And dry up my tears  
On thy high mountain-platforms,  
Where morn first appears ;

Where the white mists, for ever,  
Are spread and upfurld—  
In the stir of the forces  
Whence issued the world.

90

## 3. A FAREWELL

My horse's feet beside the lake,  
 Where sweet the unbroken moonbeams lay,  
 Sent echoes through the night to wake  
 Each glistening strand, each heath-fringed bay.

The poet's  
restless  
heart

The poplar avenue was pass'd,  
 And the roof'd bridge that spans the stream ;  
 Up the steep street I hurried fast,  
 Led by thy taper's starlike beam.

I came ! I saw thee rise !—the blood  
 Pour'd flushing to thy languid cheek. 10  
 Lock'd in each other's arms we stood,  
 In tears, with hearts too full to speak.

Days flew ;—ah, soon I could discern  
 A trouble in thine alter'd air !  
 Thy hand lay languidly in mine,  
 Thy cheek was grave, thy speech grew rare.

I blame thee not ! — this heart, I know,  
 To be long loved was never framed ;  
 For something in its depths doth glow  
 Too strange, too restless, too untamed. 20

And women—things that live and move  
 Mined by the fever of the soul—  
 They seek to find in those they love  
 Stern strength, and promise of control.

Gentle-  
ness, tran-  
quillity,  
truth

They ask not kindness, gentle ways—  
These they themselves have tried and known ;  
They ask a soul that never sways  
With the blind gusts which shake their own.

I too have felt the load I bore  
In a too strong emotion's sway ;      30  
I too have wish'd, no woman more,  
This starting, feverish heart away.

I too have long'd for trenchant force,  
And will like a dividing spear :  
Have praised the keen, unscrupulous course,  
Which knows no doubt, which feels no fear

But in the world I learnt, what there  
Thou too wilt surely one day prove,  
That will, that energy, though rare,  
Are yet far, far less rare than love.

Go, then!—till Time and Fate impress  
This truth on thee, be mine no more!  
They will!—for thou, I feel, not less  
Than I, wert destined to this lore.

We school our manners, act our parts—  
But He, who sees us through and through,  
Knows that the bent of both our hearts  
Was to be gentle, tranquil, true.

And though we wear out life, alas !  
Distracted as a homeless wind,  
In beating where we must not pass,  
In seeking what we shall not find ;

Yet we shall one day gain, life past,  
 Clear prospect o'er our being's whole ;  
 Shall see ourselves, and learn at last  
 Our true affinities of soul.

**After  
death soul-  
knowledge**

We shall not then deny a course  
 To every thought the mass ignore ;  
 We shall not then call hardness force,  
 Nor lightness wisdom any more.

60

Then, in the eternal Father's smile,  
 Our soothed, encouraged souls will dare  
 To seem as free from pride and guile,  
 As good, as generous, as they are.

Then we shall know our friends !—though much  
 Will have been lost—the help in strife,  
 The thousand sweet, still joys of such  
 As hand in hand face earthly life—

Though these be lost, there will be yet  
 A sympathy august and pure ;  
 Ennobled by a vast regret,  
 And by contrition seal'd thrice sure.

70

And we, whose ways were unlike here,  
 May then more neighbouring courses ply ;  
 May to each other be brought near,  
 And greet across infinity.

How sweet, unreach'd by earthly jars,  
 My sister ! to maintain with thee  
 The hush among the shining stars,  
 The calm upon the moonlit sea !

80

**Marguerite  
loves no  
more** How sweet to feel, on the boon air,  
All our unquiet pulses cease !  
To feel that nothing can impair  
The gentleness, the thirst for peace—

The gentleness too rudely hurl'd  
On this wild earth of hate and fear ;  
The thirst for peace a raving world  
Would never let us satiate here.

#### 4. ISOLATION. TO MARGUERITE

We were apart ; yet, day by day,  
I bade my heart more constant be.  
I bade it keep the world away,  
And grow a home for only thee ;  
Nor fear'd but thy love likewise grew,  
Like mine, each day, more tried, more true.

The fault was grave ! I might have known,  
What far too soon, alas ! I learn'd—  
The heart can bind itself alone,  
And faith is often unreturn'd. 10  
Selt-sway'd our feelings ebb and swell—  
Thou lov'st no more ;—Farewell ! Farewell !

Farewell !—and thou, thou lonely heart,  
Which never yet without remorse  
Even for a moment didst depart  
From thy remote and spheréd course  
To haunt the place where passions reign—  
Back to thy solitude again !

Back ! with the conscious thrill of shame  
 Which Luna felt, that summer night,  
 Flash through her pure immortal frame,  
 When she forsook the starry height  
 To hang over Endymion's sleep  
 Upon the pine-grown Latmian steep.

The  
lonely  
20 heart

Yet she, chaste queen, had never proved  
 How vain a thing is mortal love,  
 Wandering in Heaven, far removed.  
 But thou hast long had place to prove  
 This truth—to prove, and make thine own :  
 "Thou hast been, shalt be, art, alone."      30

Or, if not quite alone, yet they  
 Which touch thee are unmating things—  
 Ocean and clouds and night and day ;  
 Lorn autumns and triumphant springs ;  
 And life, and others' joy and pain,  
 And love, if love, of happier men.

Of happier men—for they, at least,  
 Have *dream'd* two human hearts might blend  
 In one, and were through faith released  
 From isolation without end      40  
 Prolong'd ; nor knew, although not less  
 Alone than thou, their loneliness.

## 5. TO MARGUERITE—CONTINUED

Yes ! in the sea of life enisled,  
 With echoing straits between us thrown,  
 Dotting the shoreless watery wild,  
 We mortal millions live *alone*.

The  
unplumb'd  
sea of life

The islands feel the enclasping flow,  
And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights,  
And they are swept by balms of spring,  
And in their glens, on starry nights,  
The nightingales divinely sing ;  
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,  
Across the sounds and channels pour—

10

Oh ! then a longing like despair  
Is to their farthest caverns sent ;  
For surely once, they feel, we were  
Parts of a single continent !  
Now round us spreads the watery plain—  
Oh might our marges meet again !

Who order'd, that their longing's fire  
Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd ?  
Who renders vain their deep desire ?—  
A God, a God their severance ruled !  
And bade betwixt their shores to be  
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

20

#### 6. ABSENCE

IN this fair stranger's eyes of grey  
Thine eyes, my love ! I see.  
I shudder ; for the passing day  
Had borne me far from thee.

This is the curse of life ! that not  
A nobler, calmer train

Of wiser thoughts and feelings blot  
Our passions from our brain ;

Stay, Mar-  
guerite !

But each day brings its petty dust  
Our soon-choked souls to fill,  
And we forget because we must  
And not because we will.

I struggle towards the light ; and ye,  
Once-long'd-for storms of love !  
If with the light ye cannot be,  
I bear that ye remove.

I struggled towards the light—but oh,  
While yet the night is chill,  
Upon time's barren, stormy flow,  
Stay with me, Marguerite, still !

## THE STRAYED REVELLER

### A YOUTH. CIRCE

#### THE YOUTH

FASTER, faster,  
O Circe, Goddess,  
Let the wild, thronging train,  
The bright procession  
Of eddying forms,  
Sweep through my soul.

The En.  
chantress

'Thou standest, smiling  
Down on me ; thy right arm  
Lean'd up against the column there,  
Props thy soft cheek ;                      10  
Thy left holds, hanging loosely,  
The deep cup, ivy-cinctured,  
I held but now.

Is it then evening  
So soon ? I see, the night dews,  
Cluster'd in thick beads, dim  
The agate brooch-stones  
On thy white shoulder.  
The cool night-wind, too,  
Blows through the portico,                      20  
Stirs thy hair, Goddess,  
Waves thy white robe.

## CIRCE

Whence art thou, sleeper ?

## THE YOUTH

When the white dawn first  
Through the rough fir-planks  
Of my hut, by the chestnuts,  
Up at the valley-head,  
Came breaking, Goddess,  
I sprang up, I threw round me  
My dappled fawn-skin :                      30  
Passing out, from the wet turf,  
Where they lay, by the hut door,

I snatch'd up my vine-crown, my fir-staff  
 All drench'd in dew :  
 Came swift down to join  
 The rout early gather'd  
 In the town, round the temple, \*  
 Iacchus' white fane  
 On yonder hill.

The  
magic  
drink

Quick I pass'd, following 40  
 The wood-cutters' cart-track  
 Down the dark valley ;—I saw  
 On my left, through the beeches,  
 Thy palace, Goddess,  
 Smokeless, empty :  
 Trembling, I enter'd ; beheld  
 The court all silent,  
 The lions sleeping ;  
 On the altar, this bowl.  
 I drank, Goddess—  
 And sunk down here, sleeping, 50  
 On the steps of thy portico.

40

50

#### CIRCE

Foolish boy ! Why tremblest thou ?  
 Thou lovest it, then, my wine ?  
 Wouldst more of it ? See, how glows,  
 Through the delicate flush'd marble,  
 The red creaming liquor,  
 Strown with dark seeds !  
 Drink, then ! I chide thee not,  
 Deny thee not my bowl. 60  
 Come, stretch forth thy hand, then—so,—  
 Drink, drink again !

60

**Ulysses  
enters**

THE 'YOUTH

Thanks, gracious One !  
 Ah, the sweet fumes again !  
 More soft, ah me !  
 More subtle-winding  
 Than Pan's flute-music.  
 Faint—faint ! Ah me !  
 Again the sweet sleep.

Hist ! Thou—within there !  
 Come forth, Ulysses !  
 Art tired with hunting ?  
 While we range the woodland,  
 See what the day brings.

70

Ever new magic !  
 Hast thou then lur'd hither,  
 Wonderful Goddess, by thy art,  
 The young, languid-eyed Ampelus,  
 Iacchus' darling—  
 Or some youth belov'd of Pan,  
 Of Pan and the Nymphs ?  
 That he sits, bending downward  
 His white, delicate neck  
 To the ivy-wreath'd marge  
 Of thy cup :—the bright, glancing vine-leaves  
 That crown his hair,  
 Falling forwards, mingling  
 With the dark ivy-plants ;  
 His fawn-skin, half untied,

80

89

Smear'd with red wine-stains? Who is he,  
 That he sits, overweigh'd  
 By fumes of wine and sleep,  
 So late, in thy portico?  
 What youth, Goddess,—what guest  
 Of Gods or mortals?

Who  
is the  
Youth?

Hist! he wakes!  
 I lur'd him not hither, Ulysses.  
 Nay, ask him!

THE YOUTH

Who speaks? Ah! Who comes forth  
 To thy side, Goddess, from within? 100  
 How shall I name him?  
 This spare, dark-featur'd,  
 Quick-eyed stranger?  
 Ah! and I see too  
 His sailor's bonnet,  
 His short coat, travel-tarnish'd,  
 With one arm bare.—  
 Art thou not he, whom fame  
 This long time rumours  
 The favour'd guest of Circe, brought by the  
 waves?  
 Art thou he, stranger? 111  
 The wise Ulysses,  
 Laertes' son?

ULYSSES

I am Ulysses. \*  
 And thou, too, sleeper?  
 Thy voice is sweet.

**What the  
Gods see**

It may be that thou hast follow'd  
 Through the islands some divine bard,  
 By age taught many things,  
 Age and the Muses  
 And heard him delighting  
 The chiefs and people  
 In the banquet, and learn'd his songs,  
 Of Gods and Heroes,  
 Of war and arts,  
 And peopled cities  
 Inland, or built  
 By the grey sea.—If so, then hail !  
 I honour and welcome thee.

120

## THE YOUTH

The Gods are happy.  
 They turn on all sides  
 Their shining eyes :  
 And see, below them,  
 The Earth, and men.

130

They see Tiresias  
 Sitting, staff in hand,  
 On the warm, grassy  
 Asopus' bank :  
 His robe drawn over  
 His old, sightless head :  
 Revolving inly  
 The doom of Thebes.

140

They see the Centaurs  
 In the upper glens  
 Of Pelion, in the streams,  
 Where red-berried ashes fringe

The clear-brown shallow pools ;  
 With streaming flanks, and heads  
     Rear'd proudly, snuffing  
     The mountain wind.

The  
 Centaurs—  
 Indian and  
 Scythian

150

They see the Indian  
 Drifting, knife in hand,  
 His frail boat moor'd to  
 A floating isle thick matted  
 With large leav'd, low-creeping melon-plants,  
 And the dark cucumber.

He reaps, and stows them,  
 Drifting—drifting :—round him,  
 Round his green harvest-plot,  
 Flow the cool lake-waves :  
 The mountains ring them.

160

They see the Scythian  
 On the wide Stepp, unharnessing  
     His wheel'd house at noon.  
 He tethers his beast down, and makes his meal,  
     Mare's milk, and bread  
     Baked on the embers :—all around  
 The boundless waving grass-plains stretch, thick-  
     starr'd  
 With saffron and the yellow hollyhock  
     And flag-leav'd iris flowers.                   170  
     Sitting in his cart  
 He makes his meal : before him, for long miles,  
     Alive with bright green lizards,  
     And the springing bustard fowl,  
     The track, a straight black line,  
     Furrows the rich soil : here and there  
         Clusters of lonely mounds  
         Topp'd with rough-hewn

The Chor-  
asmian  
ferry—  
what the  
Bards see

Grey, rain-blear'd statues, overpeer  
 The sunny Waste. 180  
 They see the Ferry  
 On the broad, clay-laden  
 Lone Chorasmian stream : thereon  
 With snort and strain,  
 Two horses, strongly swimming, tow  
 The ferry boat, with woven ropes  
 To either bow  
 Firm-harness'd by the mane :—a chief,  
 With shout and shaken spear  
 Stands at the prow, and guides them : but astern,  
 The cowering Merchants, in long robes, 191  
 Sit pale beside their wealth  
 Of silk-bales and of balsam-drops,  
 Of gold and ivory,  
 Of turquoise-earth and amethyst,  
 Jasper and chalcedony,  
 And milk-barr'd onyx stones.  
 The loaded boat swings groaning  
 In the yellow eddies.  
 The Gods behold them. 200

They see the Heroes  
 Sitting in the dark ship  
 On the foamless, long-heaving,  
 Violet sea :  
 At sunset nearing  
 The Happy Islands.  
 These things, Ulysses,  
 The wise Bards also  
 Behold and sing.  
 But oh, what labour ! 210  
 O Prince, what pain !

They too can see  
 Tiresias :—but the Gods,  
 Who give them vision,  
 Added this law :  
 That they should bear too  
 His groping blindness,  
 His dark foreboding,  
 His scorn'd white hairs.  
 Bear Hera's anger  
 Through a life lengthen'd  
 To seven ages.

The price  
of song

220

They see the centaurs  
 On Pelion :—then they feel,  
 They too, the maddening wine  
 Swell their large veins to bursting : in wild pain  
 They feel the biting spears  
 Of the grim Lapithæ, and Theseus, drive,  
 Drive crashing through their bones : they feel  
 High on a jutting rock in the red stream  
 Alcmena's dreadful son  
 Ply his bow :—such a price  
 The Gods exact for song ;  
 To become what we sing.

230

They see the Indian  
 On his mountain lake :—but squalls  
 Make their skiff reel, and worms  
 I' the unkind spring have gnaw'd  
 Their melon-harvest to the heart : They see  
 The Scythian :—but long frosts  
 Parch them in winter-time on the bare Stepp,  
 Till they too fade like grass : they crawl  
 Like shadows forth in spring.

240

The old  
Silenus

They see the Merchants  
On the Oxus stream :—but care  
Must visit first them too, and make them pale.  
Whether, through whirling sand,  
A cloud of desert robber-horse has burst  
Upon their caravan : or greedy kings,  
In the wall'd cities the way passes through,      250  
Crush'd them with tolls : or fever-airs,  
On some great river's marge,  
Mown them down, far from home.

They see the Heroes  
Near harbour :—but they share  
Their lives, and former violent toil, in Thebes,  
Seven-gated Thebes, or Troy :  
Or where the echoing oars  
Of Argo, first,  
Startled the unknown Sea.      260

The old Silenus  
Came, lolling in the sunshine,  
From the dewy forest coverts,  
This way, at noon.  
Sitting by me, while his Fauns  
Down at the water side  
Sprinkled and smooth'd  
His drooping garland,  
He told me these things.

But I, Ulysses,  
Sitting on the warm steps,  
Looking over the valley,  
All day long, have seen,  
Without pain, without labour,  
Sometimes a wild-hair'd Mænad ;

270

## FRAGMENT OF AN "ANTIGONE" 193

Sometimes a Faun with torches ;  
And sometimes, for a moment,  
Passing through the dark stems  
Flowing-robed—the beloved,  
The desired, the divine,  
Beloved Iacchus.

The  
beloved  
Iacchus

280

Ah cool night-wind, tremulous stars !  
Ah glimmering water—  
Fitful earth-murmur—  
Dreaming woods !  
Ah golden-hair'd, strangely-smiling Goddess,  
And thou, proved much enduring,  
Wave-toss'd Wanderer !  
Who can stand still ?  
Ye fade, ye swim, ye waver before me.      290  
The cup again !

Faster, faster,  
O Circe, Goddess,  
Let the wild thronging train,  
The bright procession  
Of eddying forms,  
Sweep through my soul !

## FRAGMENT OF AN "ANTIGONE"

### THE CHORUS

WELL hath he done who hath seized happiness.  
For little do the all-containing Hours,  
Though opulent, freely give.  
Who, weighing that life well

194 FRAGMENT OF AN "ANTIGONE"

Obedience to the primal law      Fortune presents unpray'd,  
Declines her ministry, and carves his own :  
And, justice not infringed,  
Makes his own welfare his unswerved-from law.

He does well too, who keeps that clue the mild Birth-Goddess and the austere Fates first gave. 10  
For from the day when these Bring him, a weeping child, First to the light, and mark A country for him, kinsfolk, and a home, Unguided he remains, Till the Fates come again, alone, with death.

In little companies,  
And, our own place once left,  
Ignorant where to stand, or whom to avoid,  
By city and household group'd, we live : and many shocks 20  
Our order heaven-ordin'd  
Must every day endure.  
Voyages, exiles, hates, dissensions, wars.  
Besides what waste He makes,  
The all-hated, order-breaking,  
Without friend, city, or home,  
Death, who dissevers all.  
Him then I praise, who dares  
To self-selected good  
Prefer obedience to the primal law, 30  
Which consecrates the ties of blood : for these,  
indeed,  
Are to the Gods a care :  
That touches but himself.  
For every day man may be link'd and loosed

## FRAGMENT OF AN "ANTIGONE" 195

With strangers : but the bond  
Original, deep-inwound,  
Of blood, can he not bind :  
Nor, if Fate binds, not bear.

Hæmon  
weeps

But hush ! Hæmon, whom Antigone,  
Robbing herself of life in burying, 40  
Against Creon's law, Polynices,  
Robs of a loved bride ; pale, imploring,  
Waiting her passage,  
Forth from the palace hitherward comes.

### HÆMON

No, no, old men, Creon I curse not.  
I weep, Thebans,  
One than Creon crueller far.  
For he, he, at least, by slaying her,  
August laws doth mightily vindicate :  
But thou, too-bold, headstrong, pitiless, 50  
Ah me !—honourest more than thy lover,  
O Antigone,  
A dead, ignorant, thankless corpse.

### THE CHORUS

Nor was the love untrue  
Which the Dawn-Goddess bore  
To that fair youth she erst  
Leaving the salt sea-beds  
And coming flush'd over the stormy frith  
Of loud Euripus, saw :  
Saw and snatch'd, wild with love, 60  
From the pine-dotted spurs

196 FRAGMENT OF AN "ANTIGONE"

Orion—  
Œdipus

Of Parnes, where thy waves,  
Asopus, gleam rock-hemm'd ;  
The Hunter of the Tanagræan Field.  
But him, in his sweet prime,  
By severance immature,  
By Artemis' soft shafts,  
She, though a Goddess born,  
Saw in the rocky isle of Delos die.  
Such end o'ertook that love.      70  
For she desir'd to make  
Immortal mortal man,  
And blend his happy life,  
Far from the Gods, with hers :  
To him postponing an eternal law.

But, like me, she, wroth, complaining,  
Succumb'd to the envy of unkind Gods :  
And, her beautiful arms unclasping,  
Her fair Youth unwillingly gave.

THE CHORUS

Nor, though enthroned too high      80  
To fear assault of envious Gods,  
His beloved Argive Seer would Zeus retain  
From his appointed end  
In this our Thebes : but when  
His flying steeds came near  
To cross the steep Ismenian glen,  
The broad Earth open'd and whelm'd them and him  
And through the void air sang  
At large his enemy's spear.

And fain would Zeus have saved his tired son  
Beholding him where the Two Pillars stand

90 *Death of Hercules*

O'er the sun-redden'd Western Straits :  
Or at his work in that dim lower world.

Fain would he have recall'd  
The fraudulent oath which bound  
To a much feebler wight the heroic man :

But he preferr'd Fate to his strong desire.  
Nor did there need less than the burning pile  
Under the towering Trachis crags,  
And the Spercheius' vale, shaken with groans, 100  
And the roused Maliac gulph,  
And scared Cœtaean snows,  
To achieve his son's deliverance, O my child !

## CADMUS AND HARMONIA

FAR, far from here,  
The Adriatic breaks in a warm bay  
Among the green Illyrian hills ; and there  
The sunshine in the happy glens is fair,  
And by the sea, and in the brakes.  
The grass is cool, the sea-side air  
Buoyant and fresh, the mountain flowers  
More virginal and sweet than ours.  
And there, they say, two bright and aged snakes,  
Who once were Cadmus and Harmonia, 10  
Bask in the glens or on the warm sea-shore,  
In breathless quiet, after all their ills.

**Calamity forgotten** Nor do they see their country, nor the place  
 Where the Sphinx lived among the frowning hills,  
 Nor the unhappy palace of their race,  
 Nor Thebes, nor the Ismenus, any more.

There those two live, far in the Illyrian brakes.  
 They had staid long enough to see,  
 In Thebes, the billow of calamity  
 Over their own dear children roll'd,      20  
 Curse upon curse, pang upon pang,  
 For years, they sitting helpless in their home,  
 A grey old man and woman : yet of old  
 The gods had to their marriage come,  
 And at the banquet all the Muses sang.

Therefore they did not end their days  
 In sight of blood ; but were rapt, far away,  
     o where the west wind plays,  
     nd murmurs of the Adriatic come  
 To those untrodden mountain lawns : and there 30  
 Placed safely in changed forms, the Pair  
 Wholly forgot their first sad life, and home,  
 And all that Theban woe, and stray  
 For ever through the glens, placid and dumb.

## THE HARP-PLAYER ON ETNA

### i. THE LAST GLEN

THE track winds down to the clear stream,  
 To cross the sparkling shallows : there  
 The cattle love to gather, on their way  
 To the high mountain pastures, and to stay,

Till the rough cow-herds drive them past,  
 Knee-deep in the cool ford : for 'tis the last  
 Of all the woody, high, well-water'd dells  
 Of Etna ; and the beam  
 Of noon is broken there by chestnut boughs  
 Down its steep verdant sides : the air                   10  
 Is freshen'd by the leaping stream, which throws  
 Eternal showers of spray on the moss'd roots  
 Of trees, and veins of turf, and long dark shoots  
 Of ivy-plants, and fragrant hanging bells  
 Of hyacinths, and on late anemones,  
 That muffle its wet banks : but glade,  
 And stream, and sward, and chestnut trees,  
 End here : Etna beyond, in the broad glare  
 Of the hot noon, without a shade,  
 Slope behind slope, up to the peak, lies bare ;       20  
 The peak, round which the white clouds play.

Chiron and  
Achilles

In such a glen, on such a day,  
 On Pelion, on the grassy ground,  
 Chiron, the aged Centaur, lay ;  
 The young Achilles standing by.  
 The Centaur taught him to explore  
 The mountains : where the glens are dry,  
 And the tired Centaurs come to rest,  
 And where the soaking springs abound,  
 And the straight ashes grow for spears,                   30  
 And where the hill-goats come to feed.  
 And the sea-eagles build their nest.  
 He show'd him Phthia far away,  
 And said—O Boy, I taught this lore  
 To Peleus, in long distant years.—  
 He told him of the Gods, the stars,  
 The tides :—and then of mortal wars,

The lyre's  
voice

And of the life that Heroes lead  
Before they reach the Elysian place  
And rest in the immortal mead :  
And all the wisdom of his race.

40

## 2. TYPHO

THE lyre's voice is lovely everywhere.  
In the courts of Gods, in the city of men,  
And in the lonely rock-strewn mountain glen,  
In the still mountain air.

Only to Typho it sounds hatefully,  
Only to Typho, the rebel o'erthrown,  
Through whose heart Etna drives her roots of stone,  
To imbed them in the sea.

Wherfore dost thou groan so loud ?  
Wherfore do thy nostrils flash,  
Through the dark night, suddenly,  
Typho, such red jets of flame ?  
Is thy tortured heart still proud ?  
Is thy fire-scathed arm still rash ?  
Still alert thy stone-crush'd frame ?  
Does thy fierce soul still deplore  
Thy ancient rout in the Cilician hills,  
And that curst treachery on the Mount of Gore ?  
Do thy bloodshot eyes still see  
The sight that crown'd thy ills,  
Thy last defeat in this Sicilian sea ?  
Hast thou sworn, in thy sad lair,  
Where erst the strong sea-currents suck'd thee down,  
Never to cease to writhe, and try to sleep,  
Letting the sea-stream wander through thy hair ?

10

20

That thy groans, like thunder deep,  
 Begin to roll, and almost drown  
 The sweet notes, whose lulling spell  
 Gods and the race of mortals love so well,      29  
 When through thy caves thou hearest music swell? \*

Jove's  
pleasure

But an awful pleasure bland  
 Spreading o'er the Thunderer's face,  
 When the sound climbs near his seat,  
 The Olympian Council sees ;  
 As he lets his lax right hand,  
 Which the lightnings doth embrace,  
 Sink upon his mighty knees.  
 And the Eagle, at the beck  
 Of the appeasing gracious harmony,      39  
 Droops all his sheeny, brown, deep-feather'd neck,  
 Nestling nearer to Jove's feet :  
 While o'er his sovereign eye  
 The curtains of the blue filmis slowly meet.  
 And the white Olympus peaks  
 Rosily brighten, and the soothed Gods smile  
 At one another from their golden chairs ;  
 And no one round the charmed circle speaks.  
 Only the loved Hebe bears  
 The cup about, whose draughts beguile  
 Pain and care, with a dark store      50  
 Of fresh-pull'd violets wreathed and nodding o'er ;  
 And her flush'd feet glow on the marble floor.

### 3. MARSYAS

As the sky-brightening south wind clears the day,  
 And makes the mass'd clouds roll,  
 The music of the lyre blows away  
 The clouds that wrap the soul.

Apollo  
and the  
Phrygian  
flutes

Oh, that Fate had let me see  
That triumph of the sweet persuasive lyre,  
That famous, final victory  
When jealous Pan with Marsyas did conspire ;

When, from far Parnassus' side,  
Young Apollo, all the pride  
Of the Phrygian flutes to tame,  
To the Phrygian highlands came :  
Where the long green reed-beds sway  
In the rippled waters grey  
Of that solitary lake  
Where Mæander's springs are born :  
Where the ridged pine-muffled roots  
Of Messogis westward break,  
Mounting westward, high and higher :  
There was held the famous strife ;  
There the Phrygian brought his flutes,  
And Apollo brought his lyre,  
And, when now the westerling sun  
Touch'd the hills, the strife was done,  
And the attentive Muses said,  
Marsyas ! thou art vanquishèd.

Then Apollo's minister  
Hang'd upon a branching fir  
Marsyas, that unhappy Faun,  
And began to whet his knife.

But the Mænads, who were there,  
Left their friend, and with robes flowing  
In the wind, and loose dark hair  
O'er their polish'd bosoms blowing,  
Each her ribbon'd tambourine  
Flinging on the mountain sod,  
With a lovely frighten'd mien

20

20

30

Came about the youthful God.  
 But he turn'd his beauteous face  
 Haughtily another way,  
 From the grassy sun-warm'd place,  
 Where in proud repose he lay,  
 With one arm over his head,  
 Watching how the whetting sped.

*Young  
Olympus  
weeps*

40

But aloof, on the lake strand,  
 Did the young Olympus stand,  
 Weeping at his master's end ;  
 For the Faun had been his friend.  
 For he taught him how to sing,  
 And he taught him flute-playing.  
 Many a morning had they gone  
 To the glimmering mountain lakes,  
 And had torn up by the roots  
 The tall crested water reeds  
 With long plumes and soft brown seeds,  
 And had carved them into flutes,  
 Sitting on a tabled stone  
 Where the shoreward ripple breaks.  
 And he taught him how to please  
 The red-snooded Phrygian girls,  
 Whom the summer evening sees  
 Flashing in the dance's whirls  
 Underneath the starlit trees  
 In the mountain villages.  
 Therefore now Olympus stands,  
 At his master's piteous cries,  
 Pressing fast with both his hands  
 His white garment to his eyes,  
 Not to see Apollo's scorn ;—  
 Ah, poor Faun, poor Faun ! ah, poor Faun ! 70

50

60

## 4. APOLLO

Etna and  
Helicon

THROUGH the black, rushing smoke-bursts,  
Quick breaks the red flame.  
All Etna heaves fiercely  
Her forest-clothed frame.

Not here, O Apollo !  
Are haunts meet for thee.  
But, where Helicon breaks down  
In cliff to the sea.

Where the moon-silver'd inlets  
Send far their light voice  
Up the still vale of Thisbe,  
O speed, and rejoice !

10

On the sward, at the cliff-top,  
Lie strewn the white flocks ;  
On the cliff-side, the pigeons  
Roost deep in the rocks.

In the moonlight the shepherds,  
Soft lull'd by the rills,  
Lie wrapt in their blankets,  
Asleep on the hills.

20

—What Forms are these coming  
So white through the gloom ?  
What garments out-glistening  
The gold-flower'd broom ?

What sweet-breathing Presence  
Out-perfumes the thyme ?

What voices enrapture  
The night's balmy prime ?—

The Muses

"Tis Apollo comes leading  
His choir, The Nine.  
—The Leader is fairest,  
But all are divine.

30

They are lost in the hollows,  
They stream up again.  
What seeks on this mountain  
The glorified train ?—

They bathe on this mountain,  
In the spring by their road.  
Then on to Olympus,  
Their endless abode.

40

—Whose praise do they mention,  
Of what is it told ?—  
What will be for ever,  
What was from of old.

First hymn they the Father  
Of all things ; and then  
The rest of Immortals,  
The action of men.

The Day in its hotness,  
The strife with the palm ;  
The Night in its silence,  
The Stars in their calm.

50

# THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE STARS

Intelligent Sons of Heaven AND you, ye stars !  
Who slowly begin to marshal,  
As of old, in the fields of heaven,  
Your distant, melancholy lines—  
Have you, too, survived yourselves ?  
Are you, too, what I fear to become ?  
You too once lived—  
You too moved joyfully  
Among august companions  
In an older world, peopled by Gods,      10  
In a mightier order,  
The radiant, rejoicing, intelligent Sons of Heaven !  
But now, you kindle  
Your lonely, cold-shining lights,  
Unwilling lingerers  
In the heavenly wilderness,  
For a younger, ignoble world.  
And renew, by necessity,  
Night after night your courses,  
In echoing unnear'd silence,      20  
Above a race you know not.  
Uncaring and undelighted,  
Without friend and without home.  
Weary like us, though not  
Weary with our weariness.

## PHILOMELA

HARK ! ah, the Nightingale !  
The tawny-throated !

Hark ! from that moonlit cedar what a burst !  
What triumph ! hark--what pain !

Eternal  
Passion  
and Pain

O Wanderer from a Grecian shore,  
Still, after many years, in distant lands,  
Still nourishing in thy bewilder'd brain  
That wild, unquench'd, deep-sunken, old-world  
    pain—

Say, will it never heal ?  
And can this fragrant lawn  
With its cool trees, and night,  
And the sweet, tranquil T'hames,  
And moonshine, and the dew,  
To thy rack'd heart and brain  
    Afford no balm ?

10

Dost thou to-night behold  
Here, through the moonlight on this English grass,  
The unfriendly palace in the Thracian wild ?

Dost thou again peruse  
With hot cheeks and sear'd eyes  
The too clear web, and thy dumb Sister's shame ?

20

Dost thou once more assay  
Thy flight, and feel come over thee,  
Poor Fugitive, the feathery change  
Once more, and once more seem to make resound  
With love and hate, triumph and agony,  
Lone Daulis, and the high Cephissian vale ?

Listen, Eugenia—  
How thick the bursts come crowding through the  
    leaves !

Again—thou hearest !

30

Eternal Passion  
Eternal Pain !

## THEKLA'S ANSWER

(FROM SCHILLER)

**Wallen.  
stein's  
Daughter** WHERE I am, thou ask'st, and where I wended  
 When my fleeting shadow pass'd from thee?—  
 Am I not concluded now, and ended?  
 Have not life and love been granted me?

Ask, where now those nightingales are singing,  
 Who, of late, on the soft nights of May,  
 Set thine ears with soul-fraught music ringing—  
 Only, while their love lived, lasted they.

Find I him, from whom I had to sever?—  
 Doubt it not, we met, and we are one.      10  
 There, where what is join'd, is join'd for ever,  
 There, where tears are never more to run.

There thou too shalt live with us together,  
 When thou too hast borne the love we bore:  
 There, from sin deliver'd, dwells my Father,  
 Track'd by Murder's bloody sword no more.

There he feels, it was no dream deceiving  
 Lured him starwards to uplift his eye:  
 God doth match his gifts to man's believing;  
 Believe, and thou shalt find the Holy nigh.      20

All thou augrest here of lovely seeming  
 There shall find fulfilment in its day:  
 Dare, O Friend, be wandering, dare be dreaming;  
 Lofty thought lies oft in childish play.

## URANIA (EXCUSE)

I too have suffer'd : yet I know  
 She is not cold, though she seems so :  
 She is not cold, she is not light ;  
 But our ignoble souls lack might.

The  
Muse's  
scorn

She smiles and smiles, and will not sigh,  
 While we for hopeless passion die ;  
 Yet she could love, those eyes declare,  
 Were but men nobler than they are.

Eagerly once her gracious ken  
 Was turn'd upon the sons of men.                      10  
 But light the serious visage grew—  
 She look'd, and smiled, and saw them through.

Our petty souls, our strutting wits,  
 Our labour'd puny passion-fits—  
 Ah, may she scorn them still, till we  
 Scorn them as bitterly as she !

Yet oh, that Fate would let her see  
 One of some better race than we ;  
 One for whose sake she once might prove  
 How deeply she who scorns can love.                      20

His eyes be like the starry lights—  
 His voice like sounds of summer nights—  
 In all his lovely mien let pierce  
 The magic of the universe.

## The Muse and the Poet

And she to him will reach her hand,  
And gazing in his eyes will stand,  
And know her friend, and weep for glee,  
And cry—Long, long I 've look'd for thee.—

Then will she weep—with smiles, till then,  
Coldly she mocks the sons of men. 30  
Till then her lovely eyes maintain  
Their gay, unwavering, deep disdain.

## EUPHROSYNE (INDIFFERENCE)

I must not say that thou wert true,  
Yet let me say that thou wert fair.  
And they that lovely face who view,  
They will not ask if truth be there.

Truth—what is truth? Two bleeding hearts  
Wounded by men, by Fortune tried,  
Outwearied with their lonely parts,  
Vow to beat henceforth side by side.

The world to them was stern and drear ;  
Their lot was but to weep and moan.      10  
Ah, let them keep their faith sincere,  
For neither could subsist alone !

But souls whom some benignant breath  
Has charm'd at birth from gloom and care,  
These ask no love—these plight no faith,  
For they are happy as they are.

The world to them may homage make,  
And garlands for their forehead weave.  
And what the world can give, they take,  
But they bring more than they receive.

**Unallayed  
Desire**

29

They smile upon the world : their ears  
To one demand alone are coy.  
They will not give us love and tears—  
They bring us light, and warmth, and joy.

It was not love that heaved thy breast,  
Fair child ! it was the bliss within.  
Adieu ! and say that one, at least,  
Was just to what he did not win.

## DESTINY

Why each is striving, from of old,  
To love more deeply than he can ?  
Still would be true, yet still grows cold ?  
—Ask of the Powers that sport with man !

They yoked in him, for endless strife,  
A heart of ice, a soul of fire ;  
And hurl'd him on the Field of Life,  
An aimless unallay'd Desire.

## COURAGE

TRUE, we must tame our rebel will :  
True, we must bow to Nature's law :

## COURAGE

Byron's  
fiery  
courage

Must bear in silence many an ill ;  
Must learn to wail, renounce, withdraw.

Yet now, when boldest wills give place.

\* When Fate and Circumstance are strong,  
And in their rush the human race  
Are swept, like huddling sheep, along :

Those sterner spirits let me prize,  
Who, though the tendence of the whole      10  
'They less than us might recognize,  
Kept, more than us, their strength of soul.

Yes, be the second Cato praised !

Not that he took the course to die—  
But that, when 'gainst himself he raised  
His arm, he raised it dauntlessly.

And, Byron ! let us dare admire  
If not thy fierce and turbid song,  
Yet that, in anguish, doubt, desire,  
Thy fiery courage still was strong.      20

The sun that on thy tossing pain  
Did with such cold derision shine,  
He crush'd thee not with his disdain—  
He had his glow, and thou hadst thine.

Our bane, disguise it as we may  
To weakness, is a faltering course,  
Oh that past times would give one day,  
Join'd to its clearness, of their force !

## FADED LEAVES

## I. THE RIVER

STILL glides the stream, slow drops the boat      Pent-up  
tears  
Under the rustling poplars' shade ;  
Silent the swans beside us float—  
None speaks, none heeds ; ah, turn thy head !

Let those arch eyes now softly shine,  
That mocking mouth grow sweetly bland ;  
Ah, let them rest, those eyes, on mine !  
On mine let rest that lovely hand !

My pent-up tears oppress my brain,  
My heart is swoln with love unsaid.      10  
Ah, let me weep, and tell my pain,  
And on thy shoulder rest my head !

Before I die—before the soul,  
Which now is mine, must re-attain  
Immunity from my control,  
And wander round the world again ;

Before this teased o'erlabour'd heart  
For ever leaves its vain employ,  
Dead to its deep habitual smart,  
And dead to hopes of future joy.      11

## 2. TOO LATE

Heart—  
and Hand?

EACH on his own strict line we move,  
And some find death ere they find love ;  
So far apart their lives are thrown  
From the twin soul which halves their own.

And sometimes, by still harder fate,  
The lovers meet, but meet too late.  
— Thy heart is mine !—*True, true ! ah, true !*  
— Then, love, thy hand!—*Ah no ! adieu !*

## 3. SEPARATION

STOP !—not to me, at this bitter departing,  
Speak of the sure consolations of Time !  
Fresh be the wound, still-renew'd be its smarting,  
So but thy image endure in its prime.

But, if the steadfast commandment of Nature  
Wills that remembrance should always decay—  
If the loved form and the deep-cherish'd feature  
Must, when unseen, from the soul fade away—

Me let no half-effaced memories cumber !  
Fled, fled at once, be all vestige of thee !      10  
Deep be the darkness and still be the slumber—  
Dead be the Past and its phantoms to me !

Then, when we meet, and thy look strays toward  
me,  
Scanning my face and the changes wrought there:  
*Who, let me say, is this Stranger regards me,*  
*With the grey eyes, and the lovely brown hair ?*

## 4. ON THE RHINE

VAIN is the effort to forget.  
 Some day I shall be cold, I know,  
 As is the eternal moonlit snow  
 Of the high Alps, to which I go :  
 But ah, not yet ! not yet !

Not yet

Vain is the agony of grief.  
 'Tis true, indeed, an iron knot  
 Ties straitly up from mine thy lot,  
 And were it snapt—thou lov'st me not !  
 But is despair relief ?

10

Awhile let me with thought have done ;  
 And as this brimm'd unwrinkled Rhine  
 And that far purple mountain line  
 Lie sweetly in the look divine  
 Of the slow-sinking sun ;

So let me lie, and calm as they  
 Let beam upon my inward view  
 Those eyes of deep, soft, lucent hue—  
 Eyes too expressive to be blue,  
 Too lovely to be grey.

20

Ah, Quiet, all things feel thy balm !  
 Those blue hills too, this river's flow,  
 Were restless once, but long ago.  
 Tamed is their turbulent youthful glow :  
 Their joy is in their calm.

## 5. LONGING

Come in  
dreams

COME to me in my dreams, and then  
By day I shall be well again.  
For then the night will more than pay  
The hopeless longing of the day.

Come, as thou cam'st a thousand times  
A messenger from radiant climes,  
And smile on thy new world, and be  
As kind to others as to me.

Or, as thou never cam'st in sooth,  
Come now, and let me dream it truth.      10  
And part my hair, and kiss my brow,  
And say—My love ! why sufferest thou ?

Come to me in my dreams, and then  
By day I shall be well again.  
For then the night will more than pay  
The hopeless longing of the day.

## DESPONDENCY

THE thoughts that rain their steady glow  
Like stars on life's cold sea,  
Which others know, or say they know—  
They never shone for me.

Thoughts light, like gleams, my spirit's sky,  
But they will not remain ;  
They light me once, they hurry by,  
And never come again.

## SELF-DECEPTION

SAY, what blinds us, that we claim the glory  
 Of possessing powers not our share?—  
 Since man woke on earth, he knows his story,  
 But, before we woke on earth, we were.

Ante-  
natal  
spirit-life

Long, long since, undower'd yet, our spirit  
 Roam'd, ere birth, the treasures of God:  
 Saw the gifts, the powers it might inherit;  
 Ask'd an outfit for its earthly road.

Then, as now, this tremulous, eager being  
 Strain'd, and long'd, and grasp'd each gift it saw. 10  
 Then, as now, a Power beyond our seeing  
 Staved us back, and gave our choice the law.

Ah, whose hand that day through heaven guided  
 Man's new spirit, since it was not we?  
 Ah, who sway'd our choice, and who decided  
 What the parts, and what the whole should be?

For, alas! he left us each retaining  
 Shreds of gifts which he refused in full.  
 Still these waste us with their hopeless straining—  
 Still the attempt to use them proves them null. 20

And on earth we wander, groping, reeling;  
 Powers stir in us, stir and disappear.  
 Ah, and he, who placed our master-feeling,  
 Fail'd to place that master-feeling clear.

Words-  
worth  
dead—  
Nature  
ever fresh

We but dream we have 'our wish'd-for powers.  
Ends we seek we never shall attain.  
Ah, *some* power exists there, which is ours?  
*Some* end is there, we indeed may gain?

## THE YOUTH OF NATURE

RAISED are the dripping oars—  
Silent the boat : the lake,  
Lovely and soft as a dream,  
Swims in the sheen of the moon.  
The mountains stand at its head  
Clear in the pure June night,  
But the valleys are flooded with haze.  
Rydal and Fairfield are there ;  
In the shadow Wordsworth lies dead.  
So it is, so it will be for aye.

10

Nature is fresh as of old,  
Is lovely : a mortal is dead.  
The spots which recall him survive,  
For he lent a new life to these hills.  
The Pillar still broods o'er the fields  
That border Ennerdale Lake,  
And Egremont sleeps by the sea.  
The gleam of the Evening Star  
Twinkles on Grasmere no more,  
But ruin'd and solemn and grey  
The sheepfold of Michael survives,  
And far to the south, the heath  
Still blows in the Quantock coombs,  
By the favourite waters of Ruth.

20

These survive : yet not without pain,  
 Pain and dejection to-night,  
 Can I feel that their Poet is gone.

Words-  
worth and  
Tiresias

He grew old in an age he condemn'd.  
 He look'd on the rushing decay  
 Of the times which had shelter'd his youth. 30  
 Felt the dissolving throes  
 Of a social order he loved.  
 Outlived his brethren, his peers,  
 And, like the Theban seer,  
 Died in his enemies' day.

Cold bubbled the spring of Tilphusa.  
 Copais lay bright in the moon.  
 Helicon glass'd in the lake  
 Its firs, and afar, rose the peaks  
 Of Parnassus, snowily clear. 40  
 Thebes was behind him in flames,  
 And the clang of arms in his ear,  
 When his awe-struck captors led  
 The Theban seer to the spring.  
 Tiresias drank and died.  
 Nor did reviving Thebes  
 See such a prophet again.

Well, may we mourn, when the head  
 Of a sacred poet lies low  
 In an age which can rear them no more. 50  
 The complaining millions of men  
 Darken in labour and pain ;  
 But he was a priest to us all  
 Of the wonder and bloom of the world,  
 Which we saw with his eyes, and were glad.

The dead  
Nature-  
Priest

He is dead, and the fruit-bearing day  
Of his race is past on the earth ;  
And darkness returns to our eyes.

For oh, is it you, is it you,  
Moonlight, and shadow, and lake,      60  
And mountains, that fills us with joy,  
Or the Poet who sings you so well ?  
Is it you, O Beauty, O Grace,  
O Charm, O Romance, that we feel,  
Or the voice which reveals what you are ?  
Are ye, like daylight and sun,  
Shared and rejoiced in by all ?  
Or are ye immersed in the mass  
Of matter, and hard to extract,  
Or sunk at the core of the world      70  
Too deep for the most to discern ?

Like stars in the deep of the sky,  
Which arise on the glass of the sage,  
But are lost when their watcher is gone.

“ They are here ”—I heard, as men heard  
In Mysian Ida the voice  
Of the Mighty Mother, or Crete,  
The murmur of Nature reply—  
“ Loveliness, Magic, and Grace,  
They are here—they are set in the world—      80  
They abide—and the finest of souls  
Has not been thrill’d by them all,  
Nor the dullest been dead to them quite.  
The poet who sings them may die,  
But they are immortal, and live,  
For they are the life of the world.  
Will ye not learn it, and know,

When ye mourn that a poet is dead,  
 That the singer was less than his themes,  
 Life, and Emotion, and I?

Nature  
addresses  
the Artist

“ More than the singer are these.  
 Weak is the tremor of pain  
 That thrills in his mournfullest chord  
 To that which once ran through his soul.  
 Cold the elation of joy  
 In his gladdest, airiest song,  
 To that which of old in his youth  
 Fill’d him and made him divine.  
 Hardly his voice at its best  
 Gives us a sense of the awe,  
 The vastness, the grandeur, the gloom  
 Of the unlit gulf of himself.

91

100

“ Ye know not yourselves—and your bards,  
 The clearest, the best, who have read  
 Most in themselves, have beheld  
 Less than they left unreveal’d.  
 Ye express not yourselves—can ye make  
 With marble, with colour, with word  
 What charm’d you in others re-live?  
 Can thy pencil, O Artist, restore  
 The figure, the bloom of thy love,  
 As she was in her morning of spring?  
 Canst thou paint the ineffable smile  
 Of her eyes as they rested on thine?  
 Can the image of life have the glow,  
 The motion of life itself?

110

“ Yourselves and your fellows ye know not—and me  
 The mateless, the one, will ye know?

**Nature** Will ye scan me, and read me, and tell  
 alone Of the thoughts that ferment in my breast,  
 eternal My longing, my sadness, my joy?  
 Will ye claim for your great ones the gift  
 To have render'd the gleam of my skies,  
 To have echoed the moan of my seas,  
 Utter'd the voice of my hills?  
 When your great ones depart, will ye say—  
 ‘All things have suffer'd a loss—  
 Nature is hid in their grave?’

120

“Race after race, man after man,  
 Have dream'd that my secret was theirs,  
 Have thought that I lived but for them,  
 That they were my glory and joy.—  
 They are dust, they are changed, they are gone.  
 I remain.”

130

## THE YOUTH OF MAN

We, O Nature, depart,  
 Thou survivest us: this,  
 This, I know, is the law.  
 Yes, but more than this,  
 Thou who seest us die  
 Seest us change while we live;  
 Seest our dreams one by one,  
 Seest our errors depart:  
 Watchest us, Nature, throughout,  
 Mild and inscrutably calm.

Well for us that we change !  
 Well for us that the Power  
 Which in our morning prime,  
 Saw the mistakes of our youth,  
 Sweet, and forgiving, and good,  
 Sees the contrition of age !

The Artist  
addresses  
Nature

Behold, O Nature, this pair !  
 See them to-night where they stand,  
 Not with the halo of youth  
 Crowning their brows with its light,  
 Not with the sunshine of hope,  
 Not with the rapture of spring,  
 Which they had of old when they stood  
 Years ago at my side

20

In this self-same garden, and said ;  
 " We are young, and the world is ours,  
 For man is the king of the world.  
 Fools that these mystics are  
 Who prate of Nature ! but she

Has neither beauty, nor warmth,  
 Nor life, nor emotion, nor power.  
 But man has a thousand gifts,

30

And the generous dreamer invests  
 The senseless world with them all.

Nature is nothing ! her charm  
 Lives in our eyes which can paint,  
 Lives in our hearts which can feel ! "

Thou, O Nature, wert mute,  
 Mute as of old : days flew,  
 Days and years ; and Time  
 With the ceaseless stroke of his wings  
 Brush'd off the bloom from their soul.

40

Youth  
gone !

Clouded and dim grew their eye,  
Languid their heart ; for Youth  
Quicken'd its pulses no more.  
Slowly within the walls  
Of an ever-narrowing world  
They droop'd, they grew blind, they grew old.  
Thee and their Youth in thee,  
Nature, they saw no more.

50

Murmur of living !  
Stir of existence !  
Soul of the world !  
Make, oh make yourselves felt  
To the dying spirit of Youth.  
Come, like the breath of the spring.  
Leave not a human soul  
To grow old in darkness and pain.  
Only the living can feel you :  
But leave us not while we live.

60

Here they stand to-night—  
Here, where this grey balustrade  
Crowns the still valley : behind  
Is the castled house with its woods  
Which shelter'd their childhood, the sun  
On its ivied windows ; a scent  
From the grey-wall'd gardens, a breath  
Of the fragrant stock and the pink  
Perfumes the evening air.

Their children play on the lawns.  
They stand and listen : they hear  
The children's shouts, and, at times,  
Faintly, the bark of a dog  
From a distant farm in the hills :—

70

Nothing besides : in front  
 The wide, wide valley outspreads  
 To the dim horizon, reposed  
 In the twilight, and bathed in dew,  
 Corn-field and hamlet and copse  
 Darkening fast ; but a light,  
 Far off, a glory of day,  
 Still plays on the city spires :  
 And there in the dusk by the walls,  
 With the grey mist marking its course  
 Through the silent flowery land,  
 On, to the plains, to the sea,  
 Floats the imperial Stream.

Memories  
of youth

80

Well I know what they feel  
 They gaze, and the evening wind  
 Plays on their faces : they gaze ;  
 Airs from the Eden of Youth,  
 Awake and stir in their soul :  
 The past returns ; they feel  
 What they are, alas ! what they were.  
 They, not Nature, are changed.  
 Well I know what they feel.

90

Hush ! for tears  
 Begin to steal to their eyes.  
 Hush ! for fruit  
 Grows from such sorrow as theirs.

100

And they remember  
 With piercing untold anguish  
 The proud boasting of their youth.  
 And they feel how Nature was fair.  
 And the mists of delusion,

Nature's  
greatness

And the scales of habit,  
Fall away from their eyes.  
And they see, for a moment,  
Stretching out, like the desert  
In its weary, unprofitable length,  
Their faded ignoble lives. 110

While the locks are yet brown on thy head,  
While the soul still looks through thine eyes,  
While the heart still pours  
The mantling blood to thy cheek,  
Sink, O Youth, in thy soul !  
Yearn to the greatness of Nature !  
Rally the good in the depths of thyself.

## PROGRESS

THE Master stood upon the Mount, and taught.  
He saw a fire in his Disciples' eyes.  
“The old Law,” they said, “is wholly come to  
nought;  
Behold the new world rise !”

“Was it,” the Lord then said, “with scorn ye saw  
The old Law observed by Scribes and Pharisees ?  
I say unto you, see ye keep that Law  
More faithfully than these.

“Too hasty heads for ordering worlds, alas !  
Think not that I to annul the Law have will'd. 10  
No jot, no tittle from the Law shall pass,  
Till all shall be fulfil'd.”

So Christ said eighteen hundred years ago.  
 And what then shall be said to those to-day  
 Who cry aloud to lay the old world low  
 To clear the new world's way?

Fulfil-  
ment of  
the law

“ Religious fervours ! ardour misapplied !  
 Hence, hence,” they cry, “ ye do but keep man  
 blind !  
 But keep him self-immersed, preoccupied,  
 And lame the active mind.”

20

Ah, from the old world let some one answer give—  
 “ Scorn ye this world, their tears, their inward cares ?  
 I say unto you, see that *your* souls live  
 A deeper life than theirs.

“ Say ye,—The spirit of man has found new roads ;  
 And we must leave the old faiths, and walk there-  
 in ?—

Quench then the altar fires of your old Gods !  
 Quench not the fire within !

“ Bright else, and fast, the stream of life may roll,  
 And no man may the other's hurt behold.      30  
 Yet each will have one anguish—his own soul  
 Which perishes of cold.”

Here let that voice make end : then, let a strain  
 From a far lonelier distance, like the wind  
 Be heard, floating through heaven, and fill again  
 These men's profoundest mind.—

“ Children of men ! the unseen Power, whose eye  
 Ever accompanies the march of man,

**Feeling and action** Hath without pain seen no religion die,  
Since first the world began. 40

“ That man must still to some new worship press  
Hath in his eye ever but served to show  
The depth of that consuming restlessness  
Which makes man’s greatest woe.

“ Which has not taught weak wills how much they  
can,  
Which has not fall’n on the dry heart like rain?  
Which has not cried to sunk self-weary man,  
‘ Thou must be born again?’

“ Children of men ! not that your age excel  
In pride of life the ages of your sires ; 50  
But that you too feel deeply, bear fruit well,  
The Friend of man desires.”

## REVOLUTIONS

BEFORE Man parted for this earthly strand,  
While yet upon the verge of heaven he stood,  
God put a heap of letters in his hand,  
And bade him make with them what word he could.

And man has turn’d them many times : made  
Greece,  
Rome, England, France :—yes, nor in vain essay’d  
Way after way, changes that never cease.  
The letters have combined : something was made.

But ah, an inextinguishable sense  
 Haunts him that he has not made what he should.  
 That he has still, though old, to recommence,  
 Since he has not yet found the word God would.

God's  
unfound  
word

And Empire after Empire, at their height  
 Of sway, have felt this boding sense come on.  
 Have felt their huge frames not constructed right,  
 And droop'd, and slowly died upon their throne.

One day, thou say'st, there will at last appear  
 The word, the order, which God meant should be.  
 Ah, we shall know *that* well when it comes near.  
 The band will quit Man's heart:—he will breathe  
 free.

20

## SELF-DEPENDENCE

WEARY of myself, and sick of asking  
 What I am, and what I ought to be,  
 At the vessel's prow I stand, which bears me  
 Forwards, forwards, o'er the star-lit sea.

And a look of passionate desire  
 O'er the sea and to the stars I send:  
 "Ye who from my childhood up have calm'd me,  
 Calm me, ah, compose me to the end."

"Ah, once more," I cried, "Ye Stars, Ye Waters,  
 On my heart your mighty charm renew: 10  
 Still, still, let me, as I gaze upon you,  
 Feel my soul becoming vast like you."

**Teaching  
of stars  
and sea** From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of heaven,  
 Over the lit sea's unquiet way,  
 In the rustling night-air came the answer—  
 “Wouldst thou *be* as these are? *live* as they.

“Unaffrighted by the silence round them,  
 Undistracted by the sights they see,  
 These demand not that the things without them  
 Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.”      20

“And with joy the stars perform their shining,  
 And the sea its long moon-silver'd roll.  
 For alone they live, nor pine with noting  
 All the fever of some differing soul.

“Bounded by themselves, and unobservant  
 In what state God's other works may be,  
 In their own tasks all their powers pouring,  
 These attain the mighty life you see.”

O air-born Voice! long since, severely clear,  
 A cry like thine in my own heart I hear.      30  
 “Resolve to be thyself: and know, that he  
 Who finds himself, loses his misery.”

## MORALITY

We cannot kindle when we will  
 The fire that in the heart resides  
 The spirit bloweth and is still,  
 In mystery our soul abides:  
 But tasks in hours of insight will'd  
 Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd,

With aching hands and bleeding feet  
 We dig and heap, lay stone on stone ;  
 We bear the burden and the heat  
 Of the long day, and wish 'twere done.

Nature  
and God

10

Not till the hours of light return  
 All we have built do we discern.

Then, when the clouds are off the soul,  
 When thou dost bask in Nature's eye,  
 Ask, how *she* view'd thy self-control,  
 Thy struggling task'd morality—

Nature, whose free, light, cheerful air,  
 Oft made thee, in thy gloom, despair.

And *she*, whose censure thou dost dread,  
 Whose eyes thou wert afraid to seek,  
 See, on her face a glow is spread,  
 A strong emotion on her cheek.

20

"Ah child," she cries, "that strife divine—  
 Whence was it, for it is not mine ?

"There is no effort on *my* brow—  
 I do not strive, I do not weep.  
 I rush with the swift spheres, and glow  
 In joy, and, when I will, I sleep.—

Yet that severe, that earnest air,  
 I saw, I felt it once—but where ?

30

"I knew not yet the gauge of Time,  
 Nor wore the manacles of Space.  
 I felt it in some other clime—  
 I saw it in some other place.

—'Twas when the heavenly house I trod.  
 And lay upon the breast of God."

## A SUMMER NIGHT

The same In the deserted moon-blanch'd street  
 and not How lonely rings the echo of my feet !  
 the same Those windows, which I gaze at, frown,  
 Silent and white, unopening down,  
 Repellent as the world :—but see !  
 A break between the housetops shows  
 The moon, and, lost behind her, fading dim  
 Into the dewy dark obscurity  
 Down at the far horizon's rim,  
 Doth a whole tract of heaven disclose.

10

And to my mind the thought  
 Is on a sudden brought  
 Of a past night, and a far different scene.  
 Headlands stood out into the moon-lit deep  
 As clearly as at noon ;  
 The spring tide's brimming flow  
 Heaved dazzlingly between ;  
 Houses with long white sweep  
 Girdled the glistening bay :  
 Behind, through the soft air,  
 The blue haze-cradled mountains spread away.

20

That night was far more fair ;  
 But the same restless pacings to and fro,  
 And the same agitated heart was there,  
 And the same bright calm moon.

And the calm moonlight seems to say—  
 —“ Hast thou then still the old unquiet breast  
 That neither deadens into rest  
 Nor ever feels the fiery glow

That whirls the spirit from itself away,  
 But fluctuates to and fro  
 Never by passion quite possess'd,  
 And never quite benumb'd by the world's sway?"—  
 And I, I know not if to pray  
 Still to be what I am, or yield, and be  
 Like all the other men I see.

30 Man's  
brazen  
prison

For most men in a brazen prison live,  
 Where in the sun's hot eye,  
 With heads bent o'er their toil, they languidly  
 Their lives to some unmeaning taskwork give,      40  
 Dreaming of nought beyond their prison wall.  
 And as, year after year,  
 Fresh products of their barren labour fall  
 From their tired hands, and rest  
 Never yet comes more near,  
 Gloom settles slowly down over their breast.  
 And while they try to stem  
 The waves of mournful thought by which they are  
 prest,  
 Death in their prison reaches them  
 Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest.      50

And the rest, a few,  
 Escape their prison, and depart  
 On the wide Ocean of Life anew.  
 There the freed prisoner, where'er his heart  
 Listeth, will sail;  
 Nor does he know how there prevail,  
 Despotic on life's sea,  
 Trade-winds that cross it from eternity.  
 Awhile, he holds some false way, undebarr'd  
 By thwarting signs, and braves

60

**Madman or slave?** The freshening wind and blackening waves.  
 And then the tempest strikes him, and between  
 The lightning bursts is seen  
 Only a driving wreck,  
 And the pale Master on his spar-strewn deck  
 With anguish'd face and flying hair  
 Grasping the rudder hard,  
 Still bent to make some port he knows not where,  
 Still standing for some false impossible shore.  
 And sterner comes the roar 70  
 Of sea and wind, and through the deepening gloom  
 Fainter and fainter wreck and helmsman loom,  
 And he too disappears, and comes no more.  
 Is there no life, but these alone?  
 Madman or slave, must man be one?

Plainness and clearness without shadow of stain,  
 Clearness divine!  
 Ye Heavens, whose pure dark regions have no sign  
 Of languor, though so calm, and though so great  
 Are yet untroubled and unpassionate : 80  
 Who, though so noble, share in the world's toil,  
 And though so task'd, keep free from dust and soil :  
 I will not say that your mild deeps retain  
 A tinge, it may be, of their silent pain  
 Who have long'd deeply once, and long'd in vain ;  
 But I will rather say that you remain  
 A world above man's head, to let him see  
 How boundless might his soul's horizon be,  
 How vast, yet of what clear transparency.  
 How it were good to sink there, and breathe free.  
 How high a lot to fill 91  
 Is left to each man still.

## THE BURIED LIFE

LIGHT flows our war of mocking words, and yet,  
 Behold, with tears my eyes are wet.  
 I feel a nameless sadness o'er me roll.

The  
heart's  
dumbness

Yes, yes, we know that we can jest,  
 We know, we know that we can smile ;  
 But there's a something in this breast  
 To which thy light words bring no rest  
 And thy gay smiles no anodyne.

Give me thy hand, and hush awhile,  
 And turn those limpid eyes on mine,  
 And let me read there, love, thy inmost soul. 10

Alas, is even Love too weak  
 To unlock the heart and let it speak ?  
 Are even lovers powerless to reveal  
 To one another what indeed they feel ?  
 I knew the mass of men conceal'd  
 Their thoughts, for fear that if reveal'd  
 They would by other men be met  
 With blank indifference, or with blame reproved :  
 I knew they lived and moved 20  
 Trick'd in disguises, alien to the rest  
 Of men, and alien to themselves—and yet

There beats one heart in every human breast.  
 But we, my love—does a like spell benumb  
 Our hearts—our voices?—must we too be dumb?

Ah, well for us, if even we,  
 Even for a moment, can get free

The heart's mystery Our heart, and have our lips unchain'd :  
For that which seals them hath been deep  
ordain'd.

Fate, which foresaw  
How frivolous a baby man would be,  
By what distractions he would be possess'd,  
How he would pour himself in every strife,  
And well-nigh change his own identity ;  
That it might keep from his capricious play  
His genuine self, and force him to obey  
Even in his own despite, his being's law,  
Bade, through the deep recesses of our breast,  
The unregarded river of our life  
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way ;  
And that we should not see  
The buried stream, and seem to be  
Eddying about in blind uncertainty,  
Though driving on with it eternally.  
But often in the world's most crowded streets,  
But often, in the din of strife,  
There rises an unspeakable desire  
After the knowledge of our buried life,  
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force  
In tracking out our true, original course ;  
A longing to enquire  
Into the mystery of this heart that beats  
So wild, so deep in us, to know  
Whence our thoughts come, and where they go.  
And many a man in his own breast then delves,  
But deep enough, alas, none ever mines :  
And we have been on many thousand lines,  
And we have shown on each talent and power,  
But hardly have we, for one little hour,

Been on our own line, have we been ourselves ; 60      Mo.  
 Hardly had skill to utter one of all      mentary  
 The nameless feelings that course through our breast,      clearness  
 But they course on for ever unexpress'd.  
 And long we try in vain to speak and act  
 Our hidden self, and what we say and do  
 Is eloquent, is well—but 'tis not true :

And then we will no more be rack'd  
 With inward striving, and demand  
 Of all the thousand things of the hour  
 Their stupifying power,      70  
 Ah yes, and they benumb us at our call ;  
 Yet still, from time to time, vague and forlorn,  
 From the soul's subterranean depth upborne  
 As from an infinitely distant land,  
 Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey  
 A melancholy into all our day.

Only—but this is rare—  
 When a beloved hand is laid in ours,  
 When, jaded with the rush and glare  
 Of the interminable hours,      80  
 Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,  
 When our world-deafen'd ear  
 Is by the tones of a loved voice caress'd,  
 A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast  
 And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again :  
 The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,  
 And what we mean, we say, and what we would,  
 we know.  
 A man becomes aware of his life's flow  
 And hears its winding murmur, and he sees  
 The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

## 238 LINES IN KENSINGTON GARDENS

Calm And there arrives a lull in the hot race  
Wherein he doth for ever chase  
That flying and elusive shadow, Rest.  
An air of coolness plays upon his face,  
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.

91

And then he thinks he knows  
The Hills where his life rose,  
And the Sea where it goes.

## LINES

### WRITTEN IN KENSINGTON GARDENS

In this lone open glade I lie,  
Screen'd by dark trees on either hand ;  
And at its head, to stay the eye,  
Those black-topped, red-boled pine-trees stand

The clouded sky is still and grey,  
Through silken rifts soft peers the sun,  
Light the green-foliaged chestnuts play,  
The darker elms stand grave and dun.

The birds sing sweetly in these trees  
Across the girdling city's hum ;  
How green under the boughs it is !  
How thick the tremulous sheep-cries come !

Sometimes a child will cross the glade  
To take his nurse his broken toy :  
Sometimes a thrush flit overhead  
Deep in her unknown day's employ.

LINES IN KENSINGTON GARDENS 239

Here at my feet what wonders pass,  
What endless active life is here !  
What blowing daisies, fragrant grass !  
An air-stirr'd forest, fresh and clear.

Peace in  
the glade

20

Scarce fresher is the mountain sod  
Where the tired angler lies, stretch'd out,  
And, eased of basket and of rod,  
Counts his day's spoil, the spotted trout.

I, on men's impious uproar hurl'd,  
Think sometimes, as I hear them rave,  
That peace has left the upper world,  
And now keeps only in the grave.

Yet here is peace for ever new.  
When I, who watch them, am away  
Still all things in this glade go through  
The changes of their quiet day.

30

Then to their happy rest they pass.  
The flowers close, the birds are fed :  
The night comes down upon the grass :  
The child sleeps warmly in his bed.

Calm Soul of all things ! make it mine  
To feel, amid the city's jar,  
That there abides a peace of thine,  
Man did not make, and cannot mar.

40

The will to neither strive nor cry,  
The power to feel with others give.  
Calm, calm me more ; not let me die  
Before I have begun to live.

## THE FUTURE

Man the  
wanderer

A WANDERER is man from his birth.  
He was born in a ship  
On the breast of the River of Time.  
Brimming with wonder and joy  
He spreads out his arms to the light,  
Rivets his gaze on the banks of the stream.

As what he sees is, so have his thoughts been.  
Whether he wakes  
Where the snowy mountainous pass  
Echoing the screams of the eagles  
Hems in its gorges the bed  
Of the new-born clear-flowing stream :

Whether he first sees light  
Where the river in gleaming rings  
    Sluggishly winds through the plain :  
Whether in sound of the swallowing sea :—  
    As is the world on the banks  
So is the mind of the man.

Vainly does each as he glides  
Fable and dream  
Of the lands which the River of Time  
Had left ere he woke on its breast,  
Or shall reach when his eyes have been closed.  
Only the tract where he sails  
He wots of: only the thoughts,  
Raised by the objects he passes, are his.

Who can see the green Earth any more  
 As she was by the sources of Time?  
 Who imagines her fields as they lay  
 In the sunshine, unworn by the plough?  
 Who thinks as they thought,  
 The tribes who then lived on her breast,  
 Her vigorous primitive sons?

The  
River of  
Time

30

What girl  
 Now reads in her bosom as clear  
 As Rebekah read, when she sate  
 At eve by the palm-shaded well?  
 Who guards in her breast  
 As deep, as pellucid a spring  
 Of feeling, as tranquil, as sure?

40

What Bard,  
 At the height of his vision, can deem  
 Of God, of the world, of the soul,  
 With a plainness as near,  
 As flashing as Moses felt,  
 When he lay in the night by his flock  
 On the starlit Arabian waste?  
 Can rise and obey  
 The beck of the Spirit like him?

\* This tract which the River of Time  
 Now flows through with us, is the Plain.  
 Gone is the calm of its earlier shore.  
 Border'd by cities and hoarse  
 With a thousand cries is its stream.  
 And we on its breast, our minds  
 Are confused as the cries which we hear,  
 Changing and shot as the sights which we see.

Haply  
peace in  
the end

And we say that repose has fled \*  
For ever the course of the River of Time.  
That cities will crowd to its edge  
In a blacker incessanter line ;  
That the din will be more on its banks,  
Denser the trade on its stream,  
Flatter the plain where it flows,  
Fiercer the sun overhead.  
That never will those on its breast  
See an ennobling sight,  
Drink of the feeling of quiet again

60

But what was before us we know not,  
And we know not what shall succeed.

70

Haply, the River of Time,  
As it grows, as the towns on its marge  
Fling their wavering lights  
On a wider statelier stream—  
May acquire, if not the calm  
Of its early mountainous shore,  
Yet a solemn peace of its own.

And the width of the waters, the hush  
Of the grey expanse where he floats,  
Freshening its current and spotted with foam 80  
As it draws to the Ocean, may strike  
Peace to the soul of the man on its breast :  
As the pale waste widens around him—  
As the banks fade dimmer away—  
As the stars come out, and the night-wind  
Brings up the stream  
Murmurs and scents of the infinite Sea.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE ON THE BASIS OF SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

THE story of *Sohrab and Rustum* is told in Sir John Malcolm's History of Persia, as follows :—

The story  
as told by  
Malcolm

"The young Sohrab was the fruit of one of Rustum's early amours. He had left his mother, and sought fame under the banners of Afrasiab, whose armies he commanded, and soon obtained a renown beyond that of all contemporary heroes but his father. He had carried death and dismay into the ranks of the Persians, and had terrified the boldest warriors of that country, before Rustum encountered him, which at last that hero resolved to do, under a feigned name. They met three times. The first time they parted by mutual consent, though Sohrab had the advantage. The second, the youth obtained a victory, but granted life to his unknown father. The third was fatal to Sohrab, who, when writhing in the pangs of death, warned his conqueror to shun the vengeance that is inspired by parental woes, and bade him dread the rage of the mighty Rustum, who must soon learn that he had slain his son Sohrab. These words, we are told, were as death to the aged hero; and when he recovered from a trance, he called in despair for proofs of what Sohrab had said. The afflicted and dying

Mohl's youth tore open his mail, and showed his father <sup>Ferdousi</sup> a seal which his mother had placed on his arm when she discovered to him the secret of his birth, and bade him seek his father. The sight of his own signet rendered Rustum quite frantic: he cursed himself, attempted to put an end to his existence, and was only prevented by the efforts of his expiring son. After Sohrab's death, he burnt his tents, and all his goods, and carried the corpse to Seistan, where it was interred. The army of Turan was, agreeably to the last request of Sohrab, permitted to cross the Oxus unmolested. It was commanded by Haman: and Zoarrah attended, on the part of Rustum, to see that this engagement was respected by the Persians. To reconcile us to the improbability of this tale we are informed that Rustum could have no idea his son was in existence. The mother of Sohrab had written to him her child was a daughter, fearing to lose her darling infant if she revealed the truth; and Rustum, as before stated, fought under a feigned name, an usage not uncommon in the chivalrous combats of those days.'

M. Sainte Beuve, also, that most delightful of critics, in a notice of an edition of Ferdousi's great poem by M. Mohl now in course of publication at Paris, containing the original text and a prose translation, gives an analysis of this episode, with extracts from M. Mohl's translation, which I will quote at length: commencing from the point where Rustum leaves Tehmineh, the future mother of Sohrab, before the birth of her child; having given her an onyx with instructions to let the child wear it in her hair, if a girl, and on his

arm, if a boy. \* Of M. Mohl's book itself I have not been able to obtain sight.

Sainte  
Beuve o-  
the story

“Là-dessus Roustem part au matin, monté sur son cheval Raksch ; il s'en retourne vers l'Iran, et durant des années, il n'a plus que des vagues nouvelles de la belle Tehmineh et du fils qui lui est né ; car c'est un fils et non une fille. Ce fils est beau et au visage brillant ; on l'appelle Sohrab. ‘Quand il eut un mois il était comme un enfant d'un an ; quand il eut trois ans, il s'exerçait au jeu des armes, et à cinq ans il avait le cœur d'un lion. Quand il eut atteint l'âge de dix ans, personne dans son pays n'osait lutter contre lui.’ Il se distinguait, à première vue, de tous les Turcs d'alentour ; il devenait manifeste qu'il était issu d'une autre race. L'enfant, sentant sa force, alla fièrement demander à sa mère le nom de son père, et, quand il le sut, il n'eut plus de cesse qu'il n'eût assemblé une armée pour aller combattre les Iraniens et se faire reconnaître du glorieux Roustem à ses exploits et à sa bravoure.

“Sohrab choisit un cheval assez fort pour le porter, un cheval fort comme un éléphant ; il assemble une armée et se met en marche, non pour combattre son père, mais pour combattre et détrôner le souverain dont Roustem est le feudataire, et afin de mettre la race vaillante de Roustem à la place de ce roi déjà fainéant. C'est ici que l'action commence à se nouer avec un art et une habileté qui appartiennent au poète. La solution fatale est à la fois entrevue et retardée moyennant des gradations qui vont la rendre plus dramatique. Roustem, mandé en toute hâte par le roi effrayé, ne s'empresse point d'accourir. A cette nouvelle

**Ruses  
on both  
sides** d'une armée de Turcs commandée par un jeune homme si vaillant et si héroïque, il a l'idée d'abord que ce pourrait bien être son fils ; mais non : ce rejeton de sa race est trop enfant, se dit-il, 'et ses lèvres sentent encore le lait.' Roustem arrive pourtant ; mais, mal accueilli par le roi, il entre dans une colère d'Achille, et il est tout prêt à s'en retourner dans sa tente. On ne le flétrit qu'en lui représentant que s'abstenir en une telle rencontre, ce serait paraître reculer devant le jeune héros. Cependant les armées sont en présence. Roustem, déguisé en Turc, s'introduit dans un château qu'occupe l'ennemi, pour juger de tout par lui-même. Il voit son fils assis à un festin : il l'admiré, il le compare, pour la force et la beauté, à sa propre race ; on dirait, à un moment, que le sang au-dedans va parler et lui crier : *C'est lui !* Le jeune Sohrab, de son côté, quand vient le matin, en présence de cette armée dont le camp se déploie devant lui, est avide de savoir si son noble père n'en est pas. Monté sur un lieu élevé, il se fait nommer par un prisonnier tous les chefs illustres dont il voit se dérouler les étendards. Le prisonnier les énumère avec complaisance et les lui nomme tous, tous excepté un seul, excepté celui, précisément, qui l'intéresse. Le prisonnier fait semblant de croire que Roustem n'est pas venu, car il craint que ce jeune orgueilleux, dans sa force indomptable, ne veuille se signaler en s'attaquant de préférence à ce chef illustre, et qu'il ne cause un grand malheur. Sohrab insiste et trouve étonnant qu'entre tant de chefs, le vaillant Roustem, le premier de tous, ait manqué cette fois à l'appel ; il presse de questions le prisonnier, qui lutte de ruse,

et qui s'obstine, sur ce point, à lui cacher la vérité : Father ' Sans doute, réplique celui-ci, le héros sera allé and son dans le Zaboulistan, car c'est le temps des fêtes dans les jardins de roses.' A quoi Sohrab, sentant bouillonner son sang, répond : ' Ne parle pas ainsi, car le front de Roustem se tourne toujours vers le combat.' Mais Sohrab a beau vouloir forcer le secret, la fatalité l'emporte : ' Comment veux-tu gouverner ce monde que gouverne Dieu ? ' s'écrie le poète. ' C'est le Créateur qui a déterminé d'avance toutes choses. Le sort a écrit autrement que tu n'aurais voulu, et, comme il te mène, il faut que tu suives.'

"Sohrab engage le combat ; tout plie devant lui. Jamais nos vieux romans de chevalerie n'ont retenti de pareils coups d'épée. Les plus vaillants chefs reculent. Roustem est appelé ; il arrive, il se trouve seul en présence de son fils, et le duel va s'entamer. La pitié, tout à coup, saisit le vieux chef, en voyant ce jeune guerrier si fier et si beau :

"'O jeune homme si tendre ! ' lui dit-il, ' la terre est sèche et froide, l'air doux et chaud. Je suis vieux ; j'ai vu maint champ de bataille, j'ai détruit mainte armée, et je n'ai jamais été battu . . . Mais j'ai pitié de toi et ne voudrais pas t'arracher la vie. Ne reste pas avec les Turcs ; je ne connais personne dans l'Iran qui ait des épaules et des bras comme toi.'

'En entendant ces paroles qui semblent sortir d'une âme amie, le cœur de Sohrab s'élance, il a un pressentiment soudain ; il demande ingénument au guerrier s'il n'est pas celui qu'il cherche, s'il n'est pas l'illustre Roustem. Mais le vieux chef, qui ne veut pas donner à ce jouvenceau trop d'or-

Fate gueil, répond avec ruse qu'il n'est pas Roustem, et le cœur de Sohrab se resserre aussitôt ; le nuage qui venait de s'entr'ouvrir se referme, et la destinée se poursuit.

“ Le duel commence : il n'est pas sans vicissitudes et sans péripéties singulières ; il dure deux jours. Dès le premier choc, les épées des combattants se brisent en éclats sous leurs coups : ‘ Quel coups ! on eût dit qu'ils amenaient la Résurrection ! ’ Le combat continue à coups de massue ; nous sommes en plein âge héroïque. Le premier jour, le duel n'a pas de résultat. Après une lutte acharnée, les deux chefs s'éloignent, se donnant rendez-vous pour le lendemain. Roustem s'étonne d'avoir rencontré pour la première fois son égal, presque son maître, et de sentir son cœur défaillir sans savoir pourquoi. Le second jour, au moment de reprendre la lutte, Sohrab a un mouvement de tendresse, et la nature, près de succomber, fait en lui comme un suprême effort. En abordant le vieux chef, il s'adresse à lui le sourire sur les lèvres et comme s'ils avaient passé la nuit amicalement ensemble :

“ ‘ Comment as-tu dormi ? ’ lui demande-t-il, ‘ comment t'es-tu levé ce matin ? Pourquoi as-tu préparé ton cœur pour la lutte ? Jette cette massue et cette épée de la vengeance, jette tout cet appareil d'un combat impie. Asseyons-nous tous deux à terre, et adoucissons avec du vin nos regards courroucés. Faisons un traité en invoquant Dieu, et repentons-nous dans notre cœur de cette inimitié. Attends qu'un autre se présente pour le combat, et apprête avec moi une fête. Mon cœur te communiquera son amour, et je ferai

couler de tes yeux des larmes de honte. Puisque ~~Resigna-~~  
tu es né d'une noble race, fais-moi connaître ton  
origine ; ne me cache pas ton nom, puisque tu vas  
me combattre : ne serais-tu pas Roustem ?'

"Roustem, par sentiment d'orgueil, et soupçonnant toujours une feinte de la part d'un jeune homme avide de gloire, dissimule une dernière fois, et, dès ce moment, le sort n'a plus de trêve. Toutes ces ruses de Roustem (et j'en supprime encore) tournent contre lui ; il finit par plonger un poignard dans la poitrine de son fils, et ne le reconnaît que dans l'instant suprême. Le jeune homme meurt avec résignation, avec douceur, en pensant à sa mère, à ses amis, en recommandant qu'on épargne ~~après~~ lui cette armée qu'il a engagée dans une entreprise téméraire :

"Pendant bien des jours, je leur ai donné de belles paroles, je leur ai donné l'espoir de tout obtenir ; car comment pouvais-je savoir, O héros illustre, que je périrais de la main de mon père ? . . . Je voyais les signes que ma mère m'avait indiqués, mais je n'en croyais pas mes yeux. Mon sort était écrit au-dessus de ma tête, et je devais mourir de la main de mon père. Je suis venu comme la foudre, je m'en vais comme le vent ; peut-être que je te retrouverai heureux dans le ciel !'

"Ainsi parle en expirant cet autre Hippolyte, immolé ici de la main de Thésée."

A writer in the *Christian Remembrancer* (of the general tenour of whose remarks I have, assuredly, no right to complain) having made the discovery of this notice by M. Sainte Beuve, has pointed out the passages in which I have made use of the

The future Lord Goleridge in judgment extracts from M. Mohl's translation which it contains; has observed, apparently with blame, that I "have not thought fit to offer a single syllable of acknowledgement to an author to whom I have been manifestly very largely indebted;" has complained of being "under some embarrassment from not being sure how much of the treatment is Mr. Arnold's own;" and, finally, has suggested that "the whole work of M. Mohl may have been used throughout, and the study of antiquity carried so far as simply to reproduce an ancient poem as well as an ancient subject."

It would have been more charitable, perhaps, had the reviewer, before making this goodnatured suggestion, ascertained, by reference to M. Mohl's work, how far it was confirmed by the fact.

The reader, however, is now in possession of the whole of the sources from which I have drawn the story of *Sohrab and Rustum*, and can determine, if he pleases, the exact amount of my obligation to M. Mohl. But I hope that it will not in future be supposed, if I am silent as to the sources from which a poem has been derived, that I am trying to conceal obligations, or to claim an absolute originality for all parts of it. When any man endeavours to "*remanier et réinventer à sa manière*" a great story, which, as M. Sainte Beuve says of that of *Sohrab and Rustum*, has "*couru le monde*," it may be considered quite certain that he has not drawn all the details of his work out of his own head. The reader is not, I think, concerned to ask, from what sources these have been drawn; but only how the whole work, as it stands, affects him. Real plagiarism, such as the borrowing

without acknowledgment of passages from other English poets—real dishonesty, such as the endeavouring to pass off the mere translation of a poem as an original work—are always certain enough to be discovered.

I must not be led on, from defending the morality of my imitation, to defend at length its æsthetics; but I cannot forbear adding, that it would be a most unfortunate scruple which should restrain an author, treating matter of history or tradition, from placing, where he can, in the mouths of his personages the very words of the old chronicle, or romance, or poem (when the poem embodies, as that of Ferdousi, the tradition of a people); and which should lead him to substitute for these any “*eigene grossen Erfindungen.*” For my part, I only regret that I could not meet with a translation from Ferdousi’s poem of the whole of the episode of *Sohrab and Rustum*: with a prose translation, that is: for in a verse translation no original work is any longer recognisable. I should certainly have made all the use I could of it. The use of the tradition, above everything else, gives to a work that *naïveté*, that flavour of reality and truth, which is the very life of poetry.

*This issue of Matthew Arnold's "NARRATIVE,  
ELEGIAC, AND LYRIC POEMS" has been edited  
by Mr. H. BUXTON FORMAN. In the accom-  
panying "Bibliographical Epilogue," Mr.  
Forman has explained the sources of the  
present collection.*

**I. G.**

*April 2nd, 1900.*

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL EPILOGUE

To trace the bibliography of Matthew Arnold's poetry is to be struck anew by the fastidiousness of his taste in matters connected with his art. That fastidiousness was evidenced as clearly by the fitful liberality and vacillatory character of his rejections as by the work done upon the text of his poetry after first publication. Indeed the rejections and restorations go far more than the textual changes ; for these last are less extensive than might be expected. The contents of the present volume will sufficiently illustrate these points, apart from his earliest efforts and his dramatic poem *Merope*. The narrative, elegiac, and lyric poems here collected have, with their relative notes, been drawn from no fewer than six volumes. Leaving aside the Rugby prize poem *Alaric at Rome* which he never reprinted or even acknowledged until its authorship was made known through a chance copy falling into the hands of a London bookseller who identified the author by means of a manuscript note,—leaving also the Newdigate prize poem *Cromwell*, of which three separate editions were printed apart from the author's works—we come to the two striking little volumes by which he tested the critical world rather than "the general reader" before avowing his name as that of a serious candidate for poetic honours. The first of these, which had the good fortune of distinguished recognition, came out early in 1849 with the following title-page :—

THE  
STRAYED REVELLER,  
AND  
OTHER POEMS.

By A.

LONDON :  
B. FELLOWES, LUDGATE STREET.  
1849.

This volume contained, beside *The Strayed Reveller* itself, *The Sick King in Bokhara*, the *Fragment of an Antigone*, eleven sonnets, and thirteen miscellaneous poems, including a short piece called *The Hayswater Boat* which the poet never reprinted. The book is a foolscap 8vo of 136 pages. The title is preceded by a half-title reading "The Strayed Reveller, | and | Other Poems," on the verso of which is the imprint of Clay (Bread Street Hill). Next to the title is a leaf with four lines of Greek on the recto, and this is followed by the table of contents, pages vii and viii. Then, without preface, follow the 128 pages of text. The dropped head on page 1, and the head-lines, are in Roman capitals; and, save where a new poem starts with a dropped head, the pages are numbered in the usual way with Arabic figures in the outer corners. The cloth cover is of a dark green, straight-grained, blocked blind with conventional corners within three thick rectangular rules: the flowers in the corners are forget-me-nots. The back is gilt-lettered "The | Strayed | Reveller," across; and the end-papers are of primrose-coloured glazed paper. There are no advertisements of any kind.

The Greek verses prefixed to this volume reappeared in the *Poems (First Series)* at the back of the third page of the table of contents. They are as follows:—

"Α μάκαρ, δότις ἔην κεῖνον χρόνον ίδρεις ἀσιδῆς  
Μουσάων θεράπων, καὶ ἀκείρατος θῆν ἔτι λειμών·  
κῦν δ', δτε πάντα δέδασται, ἔχουσι δὲ πειρατα τέχναι,  
δστατοι δοστε δρόμου καταλειπόμεθ'—"

It has been stated over and over again, especially by the booksellers, that *The Strayed Reveller* "is extremely rare," having been withdrawn before many copies were sold: but it must not be assumed from this that its author did not give it a fair chance to get sold or withdrew it immediately. Nor, as no fewer than 500 copies were printed, is the collector safe in assuming its scarcity in the absence of an authentic account of the holocaust of undistributed copies. The statement that it was withdrawn before many were sold is not incompatible with its continued sale in dribs and continued gratuitous distribution for some years; and that is probably what happened to it, as we shall presently see.

Whatever may have happened to *The Strayed Reveller* volume in its early years, it was not till about the end of

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL EPILOGUE 255

1852 that *Empedocles on Etna and other Poems* followed it; and of this second volume Arnold has recorded that it was withdrawn before fifty copies had been sold. It is uniform in all respects with its predecessor as described above; but it is considerably thicker. The half-title reads "Empedocles on Etna, | and | Other Poems," and has Clay's imprint on the verso; and the title is as follows—\*

### EMPEDOCLES ON ETNA,

AND

### OTHER POEMS.

By A.

LONDON :

B. FELLOWES, LUDGATE STREET.

1852.

A single-line Greek motto—

Σοφώτατον, χρόνος ἀνευρίσκει γὰρ πάντα.

follows on the recto of a separate leaf, and then come the table of contents, pages vii and viii, and a half-title reading "Empedocles on Etna. | A Dramatic Poem," on the verso of which is the list of persons with description of the scene. The text extends to page 236, facing which is an advertisement displayed thus :—

BY THE SAME AUTHOR,

### THE STRAYED REVELLER,

AND

### OTHER POEMS

Small octavo, price 4s. 6d.

This is followed by a blank page and a blank leaf. It is safe to infer from the offer of the earlier volume that it had

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not then been withdrawn, and it is likely enough that very few copies had been sold during the period of over three years and a half. Probably the suppression of the second book was the signal for that of the first. The "Other Poems" issued with *Empedocles* are thirty-two in number, and include *Tristram and Iseult*. The reasons given in the preface prefixed to the present volume for not republishing *Empedocles* in 1853 doubtless sufficed for its withdrawal before fifty copies had been sold. Arnold had come to the conclusion that his choice of subject in *Empedocles* was faulty at the root; and it was like him to sacrifice his whole volume of 236 pages to an artist's scruple as to the subject of a piece occupying no more than seventy of those pages. His early letters<sup>1</sup> to his relations and friends show that he was a serious aspirant to the bays, though of necessity much pre-occupied with cares for the material means of livelihood,—cares to which we doubtless owe it that his poetic output was, relatively, so small in bulk.

On the 22nd of October 1852, writing to Wyndham Slade of the issue of *Empedocles on Etna*, he says: "I have published some poems, which, out of friendship, I forbear to send you; you shall, however, if you are weak enough to desire it, have them when we meet. Can you get from Heimann the address of one William Rossetti for me?—an ingenious youth, who used to write articles in a defunct review, the name of which I forget." The allusion to Mr. Rossetti's article in *The Germ* on *The Strayed Reveller*, while amusing the bibliographer, will indicate to the general reader that Mr. Rossetti was not to be treated with the same friendly leniency as Slade, and was to have a copy of *Empedocles* sent to him.

On the 14th of April 1853 Arnold writes to Mrs. Forster of an article on Alexander Smith in *The Examiner*; and, after dismissing Smith with *il fait son métier—faisons le nôtre*, he says: "I am occupied with a thing that gives me more pleasure than anything I have ever done yet, which is a good sign; but whether I shall not ultimately spoil it by being obliged to strike it off in fragments, instead of at one heat, I cannot quite say. I think of publishing it with the narrative poems of my first volume, *Tristram and Iseult* of my

<sup>1</sup> Letters of Matthew Arnold 1848-1888 Collected and arranged by George W. E. Russell. (2 vol., Macmillan, 1895.)

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL EPILOGUE 257

second, and one or two more, in February next, with my name and a preface." — The "thing" was, of course, *Sohrab and Rustum*; *The Strayed Reveller* and *The Forsaken Merman* were taken from the first volume; *Tristram* and *Iseult* and several other poems were taken from the *Empedocles* volume; and the preface scheme resulted in that admirable and compact confession of faith which stands at the front of the present volume. "*Sohrab and Rustum* was finished in the course of May; for in a letter to his mother dated "Monday," and assigned to "May 1853," he says: "All my spare time has been spent on a poem which I have just finished, and which I think by far the best thing I have yet done, and that it will be generally liked, though one can never be sure of this. I have had the greatest pleasure in composing it—a rare thing with me, and, as I think, a good test of the pleasure what you write is likely to afford to others; but then the story is a very noble and excellent one." This clearly refers to *Sohrab and Rustum*; and a very sound judgment it is on that beautiful episode. Up to that time there did not appear to be any notion of a change of publishers, for he says, "I have settled with Fellowes to publish this, and one or two more new ones, with the most popular of the old ones, next winter or spring, with a preface, and my name. I never felt so sure of myself or so really and truly at ease as to criticism, as I have done lately. There is an article on me in the last *North British* which I will send you. Can it be by Blackie? I think Froude's review will come sooner or later, but at present even about this I feel indifferent. Miss Blackett told Flu that Lord John Russell said, 'In his opinion Matthew Arnold was the one rising young poet of the present day.' This pleased me greatly from Lord John—if it is true."

*The North British Review* for May 1853 had dealt with both *The Strayed Reveller* and *Empedocles on Etna* in an article entitled "Glimpses of Poetry"; certainly the author's reference to the article gives no countenance to the assumption that the *The Strayed Reveller* had been withdrawn since it was offered for sale in the advertisement appended to *Empedocles on Etna*; and it is clear, as we shall see anon, that the *Empedocles* volume had itself not yet been withdrawn. Arnold did not wait till February 1854 for the realization of his scheme of fresh appeal to the public; for, while the preface

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is dated the 1st of October, his letters show that the book was in course of distribution before the end of November 1853. He was as good as his word and gave his name this time ; but now, after all, came a change of publisher and printer. The book is a foolscap 8vo resembling in general appearance its two small predecessors, but thicker, for it contains 284 pages and a trade catalogue. The half-title reads "Poems," and has on the verso the imprint of Spottiswoode and Shaw. The title-page is as follows :—

### POEMS

BY

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

A NEW EDITION.

LONDON :

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN AND LONGMANS.

MDCCCLIII.

The preface occupies pages v to xxxi, the table of contents pages xxxiii to xxxv. In the centre of p. xxxvi is printed the Greek epigraph used in the *Strayed Reveller* volume. The next leaf, which is pages 1 and 2, has the word "Poems" by way of half-title on the recto ; and on the verso is the sonnet with which the *Strayed Reveller* volume had opened ; but, instead of the original

Two lessons, Nature, let me learn of thee,  
Two lessons that in every wind are blown ;  
Two blending duties, harmonis'd in one,  
Though the loud world proclaim their enmity ;

the first quatrain is

One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee,  
One lesson that in every wind is blown ;  
One lesson of two duties served in one,  
Though the loud world proclaim their enmity—

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the position that the two lessons are in fact but one having been adopted early. The revised sonnet is followed by a half-title reading "Sohrab and Rustum," and then come the fifty pages filled by the immortal episode, and the rest of the 248 pages of text including a few sectional half-titles. The dropped heads, head-lines, and paging follow the model of the earlier volumes ; the catalogue is an alphabetical one of "General Literature," published by Longmans, dated March 31, 1853 ; the end-papers are primrose-coloured, like the earlier ones, but with printed lists on the paste-downs—of books on science inside the front cover, and of historical works inside the back cover. The cover itself is of the same dark green as the other two, but diced-grained. In the blind-blocked design the forget-me-not basis is maintained ; but it is a floreated arch within a Harleian panel. The words "Poems | by | Matthew | Arnold" appear across the back, at the top, in gilt Roman capitals.

Many of Arnold's friends saw at once the value of the treasure now delivered into their hands : John F. B. Blackett, M.P., gave the poet great pleasure by his words of greeting ; and, writing to him in reply, on the 26th of November 1853, Arnold said : " You knew, I am sure, what pleasure your letter would give me. I certainly was very anxious that you should like 'Sohrab and Rustum.' Clough, as usual, remained in suspense whether he liked it or no. Lingen wrote me four sheets on behalf of sticking to modern subjects ; but your letter, and one from Froude (which I must send you, in spite of the praise), came to reassure me."

Clough had, it seems, reviewed the two early volumes in *The North American Review*, to the number of which for July 1853 he had contributed the paper on Alexander Smith and Arnold which is preserved in his Remains. How he decided about *Sohrab and Rustum* one would gladly know. Arnold himself had his doubts of its success : continuing his letter to Blackett, he said—"I still, however, think it very doubtful whether the book will succeed : the *Leader* and the *Spectator* are certain to disparage it ; the *Examiner* may praise it, but will very likely take no notice at all. The great hope is that the *Times* may trumpet it once more." This refers to a notice in the *Times* of the two volumes of 1849 and 1852 : and the poet proceeds : " Just imagine the effect of the last notice in that paper ; it has brought *Empe-*

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*decks to the railway bookstall at Derby.*" Hence it is clear that, up to the 26th of November 1853, after the issue of the *Poems*, there had been no suppression of the *Empedocles* volume ; and, as it was ultimately withdrawn before fifty copies were sold, the sales at the Derby railway bookstall and elsewhere must have been distinctly modest, enough so to account for the poet's doubts as to the success of the larger and better volume. He was doomed to be more or less agreeably disappointed ; for by the 1st of June 1854 he was signing the short preface to a second edition, which follows the original preface in the present volume. Externally and in general appearance there is nothing to distinguish the second from the first edition ; but after the issue of the Second Series of Arnold's *Poems*, the words "First Series" were stamped in gold at the foot of the back of the First Series. On examination, the second edition is found to want five poems included in the first, and to contain one additional poem and a long note to *Sohrab and Rustum*, never reprinted (save a small portion) by Arnold, and now given both for its intrinsic value and its interest as a bit of literary history. It refers to and meets a carping and unpleasant passage in a review of the first edition, which had appeared in *The Christian Remembrancer*. In a letter to his friend Wyndham Slade, Arnold writes on the 3rd of August 1854, "My love to J. D. C., and tell him that the limited circulation of the *Christian Remembrancer* makes the unquestionable viciousness of his article of little importance. I am sure he will be gratified to think that it is so." In view of the editorial identification of J. D. C. as "Mr., afterwards Lord, Coleridge," the irony of the poet's message will be apparent.

A third edition of the *Poems* came out in 1857 still not called *First Series* on the title-page, but only on the back of the cover like late copies of the second edition. The same general description applies to the third as to the second ; but it contained one additional poem, did not contain the long note on *Sohrab and Rustum*, and is marked by the peculiarity that in the poem elsewhere known as *Tristram and Iseult*, the hero's name is here given, and here only, as "Tristan." The end-papers, like those of the second edition, are of brick-red ; and the catalogues, and advertizements on the paste-downs, of course vary in the several editions and issues.

In the meantime the "Second Series" had been published

as nearly as possible uniformly with the First; and therefore, again a foolscap 8vo volume in dark green cloth—the words "second series," however, being high up under the words "Poems by Matthew Arnold" on the back. There is no half-title in the right place: the book starts with the following title:—

### POEMS.

BY

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

SECOND SERIES.

LONDON :

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.

MDCCLV.

The imprint on the verso is that of A. & G. A. Spottiswoode. The table of contents occupies pages iii, iv, and v; page vi is blank; page vii has in the centre a single hexameter verse from the second book of the *Iliad*—

'Ημεῖς δὲ κλέος οὐρανὸκύμεν, δυδέ τι ἰδμεν.

Page viii is blank. Pages 1 and 2 are those of a half-title, "Poems," with the signature B, and a blank verso. The text occupies pages 3 to 210, which is followed by six pages of advertisements forming part of signature P of the book, and these again by a separate twenty-four page catalogue of Longmans', dated November 1854. The end-papers are of brick-red, with lists of Historical Works on the first paste-down and Books on Natural History etc. on the last. Copies occur with a catalogue dated November 1857 at the end; and in these the end-papers have no advertisements printed on them, while the words "Second Series" on the back are lettered at the foot to correspond with the First Series. It is in this book that the beautiful episode *Balder*

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*Dead* first appears : the only other new poem is *Separation* ; but, although *Empedocles on Etna* is still excluded, four of the songs of Callicles are extracted from it and grouped under the title of *The Harp-Player on Etna* ; and a further fragment from *Empedocles* is given under the title *The Philosopher and the Stars*. The rest of the contents are reprinted from one or other of the early volumes. Perhaps it may be assumed that those volumes were withdrawn at this juncture. A letter to his mother, dated the 9th of December 1854, seems to bear on this point. After referring to six copies of the new volume sent to her, of which he wishes one to be given to Mrs. Wordsworth "for the sake of the *Memorial Verses*, imperfect tribute as they are," and though they were not new, he says, "I think this book will hold me in public repute pretty much at the point where the last left me, not advance me, and not pull me down from it. If so, it was worth publishing, for I shall probably make something by the poems in their present shape, whereas if I had left them as they were, I should have continued to make nothing." The Second Series did not run to a second and third edition as the First Series had done ; but probably a greater number was printed in the first instance.

It was not until after the revival of *Empedocles on Etna* in the collection called *New Poems* (1867) at the request of Robert Browning, that Arnold began to classify his poems systematically. In 1869 he issued what is now known as the first collected edition, in two light-green-covered volumes of the size which Messrs. Macmillan & Co. call large foolscap 8vo. One volume consists of Narrative and Elegiac Poems. the other of Dramatic and Lyrical Poems. In the beautifully printed and handy Library edition in three crown 8vo volumes (1885), he divided them into Early Poems, Narrative Poems, Sonnets, Lyric Poems, Elegiac Poems, Dramatic Poems and Later Poems ; and that classification is maintained in the current editions.

## NOTES

*Preface and Advertizement.*—That Arnold did not contemplate this prefatory confession of faith is clear, albeit he did not give the *Preface and Advertizement* any place among his poetical works after the third edition of the First Series of the *Poems* was exhausted. His respect for the two compositions was evidenced in later years by his re-issuing them with his *Irish Essays*.

*Sohrab and Rustum.*—The note to this poem does not extend beyond the extract from Malcolm's *History of Persia* in any edition but the second issue of the *Poems (First Series)* and the present edition.

*The Sick King in Bokhara* appeared originally with *The Strayed Reveller*. It was not reprinted with the First Series of the *Poems* in 1853, but followed *Balder Dead* in the Second Series in 1855.

*Balder Dead.*—The source of the story of *Balder Dead* is the Prose or Younger Edda of Snorri Sturluson. Arnold seems to have derived his knowledge of the beautiful old work from Bohn's edition of Mallet's *Northern Antiquities*, a book in which Bishop Percy's translation of Mallet's French version (itself taken from the incorrect Latin version of Resenius) is not reproduced, but is superseded by a translation from the old Norse text of Rask, by Blackwell. It is very inferior to the spirited and scholarly version of Dasent published as long ago as 1842; but, as Arnold's sole note to *Balder Dead* is an extract from the Blackwell version, it is proper to retain it here.

“Balder the Good having been tormented with terrible dreams, indicating that his life was in great peril, communicated them to the assembled Æsir, who resolved to conjure all things to avert from him the threatened danger. Then Frigga exacted an oath from fire and water, from iron, and all other metals, as well as from stones, earths, diseases, beasts,

birds, poisons, and creeping things, that none of them would do any harm to Balder. When this was done, it became a favourite pastime of the *Æsir*, at their meetings, to get Balder to stand up and serve them as a mark, some hurling darts at him, some stones, while others hewed at him with their swords and battle-axes, for do what they would, none of them could harm him, and this was regarded by all as a great honour shown to Balder. But when Loki beheld the scene he was sorely vexed that Balder was not hurt. Assuming, therefore, the shape of a woman, he went to Fensalir, the mansion of Frigga. That goddess, when she saw the pretended woman, inquired of her if she knew what the *Æsir* were doing at their meetings. She replied, that they were throwing darts and stones at Balder without being able to hurt him.

“‘Ay,’ said Frigga, ‘neither metal nor wood can hurt Balder, for I have exacted an oath from all of them.’

“‘What!’ exclaimed the woman, ‘have all things sworn to spare Balder?’

“‘All things,’ replied Frigga, ‘except one little shrub that grows on the eastern side of Valhalla, and is called Mistletoe, and which I thought too young and feeble to crave an oath from.’

“As soon as Loki heard this he went away, and, resuming his natural shape, cut off the mistletoe, and repaired to the place where the gods were assembled. There he found Hödur standing apart, without partaking of the sports, on account of his blindness, and going up to him said, ‘Why dost thou not also throw something at Balder?’

“‘Because I am blind,’ answered Hödur, ‘and see not where Balder is, and have, moreover, nothing to throw with.’

“‘Come, then,’ said Loki, ‘do like the rest, and show honour to Balder by throwing this twig at him, and I will direct thy arm toward the place where he stands.’

“Hödur then took the mistletoe, and, under the guidance of Loki, darted it at Balder, who, pierced through and through, fell down lifeless.”—*Edda*.

*Balder Dead, an Episode*, was the original title of the poem; but the words *an Episode* were dropped.

*Tristram and Iseult*.—In the *Empedocles* volume, *Tristram and Iseult* was unaccompanied by any indication of the source of the fable. In the *Poems* (1853) an extract from Dunlop’s

History of Fiction was printed on the verso of a half-title; and this extract has been retained among the author's notes ever since. It is as follows:—

“In the court of his uncle King Marc, the King of Cornwall, who at this time resided at the castle of Tyntagel, Tristram became expert in all knightly exercises.—The king of Ireland, at Tristram's solicitations, promised to bestow his daughter Iseult in marriage on King Marc. The mother of Iseult gave to her daughter's confidante a philtre, or love-potion, to be administered on the night of her nuptials. Of this beverage Tristram and Iseult, on their voyage to Cornwall, unfortunately partook. Its influence, during the remainder of their lives, regulated the affections and destiny of the lovers.—

“After the arrival of Tristram and Iseult in Cornwall, and the nuptials of the latter with King Marc, a great part of the romance is occupied with their contrivances to procure secret interviews.—Tristram, being forced to leave Cornwall, on account of the displeasure of his uncle, repaired to Brittany, where lived Iseult with the White Hands.—He married her—more out of gratitude than love.—Afterwards he proceeded to the dominions of Arthur, which became the theatre of unnumbered exploits.

“Tristram, subsequent to these events, returned to Brittany, and to his long-neglected wife. There, being wounded and sick, he was soon reduced to the lowest ebb. In this situation, he despatched a confidant to the queen of Cornwall, to try if he could induce her to follow him to Brittany, etc.”—DUNLOP'S *History of Fiction*.

Arnold did an unusual amount of work on *Tristram and Iseult* when he made up the 1853 volume; and the poem gained greatly both in clearness and, curiously enough, in apparent spontaneity. Among the happy revisions of the first part are the allusion to Iseult of Brittany's white hands and the twenty-seven lines (56 to 82) about her rival Iseult of Ireland. In the second part, the quatrain about Marc, the “deeply-wrong'd husband,” was an interpolation of 1853; and the last quatrain of this dialogue was rewritten from an immeasurably inferior version—

#### TRISTRAM.

Now stand clear before me in the moonlight  
Fare, farewell, thou long, thou deeply lov'd !

## ISEULT.

Tristram ! Tristram—stray—I come ! Ah Sorrow !  
Fool ! thou missest—we are both unmov'd !

The passage following this, the supposed thoughts of the woven picture of Tristram on the arras concerning the dead Tristram and Iseult, was revised with magical effect. In the fourth issue of the poem, that is to say in the third edition of the *Poems (First Series)*, *Tyntagel* is substituted throughout for *Tyntagil*, not as a mere change of orthography, but with the alterations of rhyme and metre necessary for a change of accent as well as of vowel. *Tyntagil* in the first three issues is accented on the first and last syllables. *Tyntagel* in the final revision is accented on the second syllable. In the third part the localizing of the burial-place as King Marc's Chapel in Tyntagel was an after-thought. In 1852 the opening passage was the couplet—

“A year had flown, and in the chapel old  
Lay Tristram and Queen Iseult dead and cold.”

In 1853 and 1854 it was—

“A year had flown, and o'er the sea away,  
In Cornwall, Tristram and Queen Iseult lay ;  
At Tyntagil, in King Marc's chapel old :  
There in a ship they bore those lovers cold.”

In 1857 and afterwards the third line was—

“In King Marc's chapel, in Tyntagel old :”

which exemplifies very well the changes made for Tyntagel's sake. The poem was really perfect by 1857 (save that line 288 in Part i. was inadvertently left without a rhyme, which defect was never discovered and remedied); but after that—twenty years after—Arnold disturbed its fabric by interpolating between lines 130 and 131 of Part ii. the following passage from a poem called *Lines Written by a Death-Bed* :—

“Yes, now the longing is o'erpast,  
Which, dogg'd by fear and fought by shame,  
Shook her weak bosom day and night,  
Consumed her beauty like a flame,

And dimm'd it like the desert-blast.  
 And though the bed-clothes hide her face,  
 Yet were it lifted to the light,  
 The sweet expression of her brow  
 Would charm the gazer, till his thought  
 Erased the ravages of time,  
 Fill'd up the hollow cheek, and brought  
 A freshness back as of her prime—  
 So healing is her quiet now.  
 So perfectly the lines express  
 A tranquil, settled loveliness,  
 Her younger rival's purest grace."

The passage does not rightly fit ; and it is much better to leave it in its original context among the early poems of its author.

Possibly it may not be out of place to mention that the birds called "field-fares" in the third part of the poem—the birds which, with "the speckled missel-thrush," the children startled out of the hollies—are also thrushes, of the migratory species, generally known in England by the name of field-fares. They visit these islands in the winter, with the red-wings. The term is popularly cut down to *selfare*, and even to *seifer*, in some parts of England.

There is a line in the third part which may, perhaps, be noted by the reader as a second case of matelessness through inadvertence,—line 104—

"The hollies, and the cliff, and the sea-shore,"

but it is not quite certain that it was intended to give this line any echo nearer than the couplet (lines 114 and 115)—

"To all which has delighted them before,  
 And lets us be what we were once no more."

Although the rhyme-scheme is irregular in this poem, I hardly think it likely that the ear was intended to have the task of carrying on the sound over nine intervening lines. Line 115 is curiously like Shelley's much-debated line in the *Letter to Maria Gisborne*—

"When we shall be as we no longer are."

*The Neckan* first appeared in the *Poems* (1853).

*The Forsaken Merman*, always a favourite among Arnold's poems, though not really so good as *The Neckan*, figured in the first anonymous collection, *The Strayed Reveller* etc.

*The Scholar Gipsy* was one of the new poems accompanying *Sohrab and Rustum* in the 1853 volume. The following extract was printed on the verso of a half-title to this poem; but it has long been relegated to the "Notes":—

"There was very lately a lad in the University of Oxford, who was by his poverty forced to leave his studies there; and at last to join himself to a company of vagabond gipsies. Among these extravagant people, by the insinuating subtlety of his carriage, he quickly got so much of their love and esteem as that they discovered to him their mystery. After he had been a pretty while well exercised in the trade, there chanced to ride by a couple of scholars, who had formerly been of his acquaintance. They quickly spied out their old friend among the gipsies; and he gave them an account of the necessity which drove him to that kind of life, and told them that the people he went with were not such impostors as they were taken for, but that they had a traditional kind of learning among them, and could do wonders by the power of imagination, their fancy binding that of others: that himself had learned much of their art, and when he had compassed the whole secret, he intended, he said, to leave their company, and give the world an account of what he had learned."—GLANVIL'S *Vanity of Dogmatizing*, 1661.

The Rev. Joseph Glanvil, the author of a book "touching the Being of Witches and Witchcraft," and several other treatises, published the work from which the foregoing extract is taken as early as 1655, under the title *Scepsis Scientifica; or Confest Ignorance the Way to Science; in an Essay on the Vanity of Dogmatizing and Confident Opinion*.

The word *lasher* as employed in this poem—"To bathe in the abandon'd lasher"—is sufficiently out of common use to need a note. One of its provincial meanings is a wear; and it is of course in that sense that it is here used. It is an Oxfordshire word.

*Memorial Verses*.—These verses, ever dear to the Wordsworthian, appeared first in *Fraser's Magazine* for June 1850, and afterwards in the *Empedocles* volume and the *Poems*.

(1853). It will be remembered that Wordsworth had died on the 23rd of April 1850.

*Stanzas in Memory of Edward Quilligan.*—Although Quillinan's little volumes of verse are not without considerable accomplishment, he is probably better known to-day as Wordsworth's son-in-law—the widower (father of Jemima and Rotha Quillinan), who married Dora Wordsworth—than as the author of *The Sacrifice of Isabel, Dunluce Castle*, or the *Poems* published in 1853, after his death, by Moxon, with a memoir by William Johnston. Quillinan was born in 1791 and died in 1851. A Literary Essay on the Laureates of England is mentioned in the *Memoirs of Wordsworth* (1857, vol. ii., p. 403) as having been written by him; and a satire in Spenserian stanzas called *Mischief*, published anonymously in two parts, one in 1831 and the other in 1834, although attributed to "Alfred Quillinan" by Halkett and Laing and in the British Museum Catalogue, is really by Edward Quillinan. It appears that no such person as Alfred Quillinan is known to fame, and that none of the biographies of Edward Quillinan identifies him as the author of *Mischief*. That he wrote it I suspected from internal evidence and from the fact that copies belonging to him and Dora Quillinan, one bearing the initials D. W., were publicly sold some time ago. Mr. Gordon Wordsworth, to whom I wrote on the subject, positively confirms my suspicion.

*Haworth Churchyard* first appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* for May 1855, signed "A." It was not taken into Arnold's collected poems till 1877. The two "gifted women" whose meeting the poet celebrates were Charlotte Brontë and Harriet Martineau. The "too bold dying song" was the last of Emily Brontë's poems, to be found in *Poems by Currer Ellis and Acton Bell*, which, published in a little volume in 1846, are current in the works of the sisters. The allusion to the brother, Patrick Branwell Brontë, as "not the least gifted" of his race, is significant. The lines about Emily,

"Whose soul  
Knew no fellow for might,  
Passion, vehemence, grief,  
Daring, since Byron died,"

have been shrewdly characterized as among the least felicitous ever written by a true poet of a true poet. But the whole

poem is not very happy ; nor was it improved by the Epilogue of a few lines added in 1877.

The *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse* were published in *Fraser's Magazine* for April 1855, and were first issued among Arnold's works in the *New Poems* (1867). Apart from its characteristic beauty as a whole, it more than makes amends for *Haworth Churchyard* in the specific matter of Byron ; for, perhaps, no single line in all Arnold's poetry has more completely passed into the currency of modern cultivated speech than that about the *pageant* of Byron's *bleeding heart* :—

“ What helps it now, that Byron bore,  
With haughty scorn which mock'd the smart,  
Through Europe to the Ætolian shore  
The pageant of his bleeding heart ? ”

It is curious that a poem so profoundly conceived, and executed with so much of that combined fervour and care which marks the high lyric mood, was allowed to retain till the end one of those strange blemishes which are not altogether rare in Arnold's work. This one is purely technical—the lack of a rhyme in the quatrain :—

“ For the world cries your faith is now  
But a dead time's exploded dream ;  
My melancholy, sciolists say,  
Is a pass'd mode, an outworn theme ”—

where, in the third line, the temptation to read *vow* for *say* is strong. It is difficult to believe that the sound went wrong in the act of composition : it must have been a mere mechanical matter of writing down.

*Stanzas in Memory of the Author of “Obermann.”*—It should be, though it is not, superfluous to record that *Obermann* is the title of a series of Letters or Reflexions on Man and Nature, written in Switzerland by Étienne Pivert de Senancour and published in 1804. Born in 1770, de Senancour was educated at the Seminary of St. Sulpice in Paris ; but, though brought up a priest, he abandoned his calling, married, and passed much of his life in Switzerland. Before *Obermann* he had published, in 1798, *Rêveries sur la Nature primitive de l'Homme*. Though he never became a

popular author, he pursued the calling of a man of letters, and published *De Napoléon* in 1815, *Isabella* (another work in the form of Letters), and *Libres Méditations d'un Solitaire Inconnu* in 1819. He had affinities with Rousseau and Madame de Staël; but, as Arnold says, he possessed "a gravity and severity which distinguish him from all other writers of the sentimental school." He died in 1846, and is said to have desired to have nothing inscribed upon his tomb but the words :—

“Éternité, deviens mon asile !”

The allusions to Wordsworth, still alive when the poem was written, are very notable. It is a pity that the fine lines 91 and 92 retain a blemish which Arnold never discovered, and which no other critic can venture to amend without risk of being mishandled by his fellows. In the line

“Greater by far than thou art dead :”

are should of course be substituted for *art*.

*Switzerland*.—The six poems printed under the common heading *Switzerland* were not first issued together or under that title. *Meeting* originally appeared as *The Lake* in the *Empedocles* volume; and in the same volume appeared *Parting*, *A Farewell*, and *Absence*, under those titles. *To Marguerite*—continued also came out in that book, but with the fuller title *To Marguerite, in returning a Volume of the Letters of Ortis*. In the first and second editions of the *Poems (First Series)* it is simply called *Marguerite*, in the third edition *Isolation*. It was in that edition that the poem now called *Isolation* first appeared, as *Marguerite*: the title of *Isolation* was transferred to it in the First Collected Edition (1869). When the *Switzerland* group was originally formed in the first edition of *Poems (First Series)* its six pieces included two afterwards relegated to the *Early Poems*, the piece now called *A Memory-Picture*, but then entitled *To my Friends, who ridiculed a tender Leave-Taking*, and *A Dream*. In the second edition *A Farewell* was interpolated in the series—being revived from the *Empedocles* volume. In the third edition the series was extended to eight by the insertion of the *Marguerite* poem, now called *Isolation*. In the First Collected Edition there were still eight poems in the

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series ; but *A Dream* had disappeared and *The Terrace at Berne*, from the *New Poems*, had been introduced.

*Meeting*.—With reference to the third line of *Meeting* the poet, in a note, directed the attention of the reader to an early poem, *To my Friends, who ridiculed a tender Leave-Taking*, now called *A Memory-Picture*. The refrain of that piece had originally been—

“Ere the parting kiss be dry,  
Quick, thy tablets, Memory !”

The poet evidently wished to leave the reader in no doubt that Marguerite was the heroine of the tender leave-taking and the wet kisses ; but he revised the refrain, nevertheless, so as to leave no trace of wet kisses ; and we now read—

“Ere the parting hour go by,  
Quick, thy tablets, Memory !”

*The Strayed Reveller* was included in each of the three editions of the *Poems (First Series)*. In the first collected edition (1869) it was placed in the Narrative and Elegiac volume and among the narrative poems. Later it was classified among the lyrical poems.

*Fragment of an “Antigone.”*--The poet explains in his own editions that “The hunter of the Tanagræan Field” was “Orion, the Wild Huntsman of Greek Legend, and in this capacity appearing in both earth and sky.” With reference to the line—

“O'er the sun-redden'd western straits,”

he notes that “Erytheia, the legendary region around the Pillars of Hercules, probably took its name from the redness of the West under which the Greeks saw it.” Though this fragment first appeared with *The Strayed Reveller*, it was not reprinted with it in the first series of poems, but was given in the second series.

*Cadmus and Harmonia.*

*The Harp-Player on Etna*

*The Philosopher and the Stars.*

There is something irresistible in the temptation to enrich the lyrical section with those parts of *Empedocles on Etna* which Arnold detached and published as lyrics at a time

when he was unwilling to revive the whole as a dramatic poem. It is equally impossible not to regret that the poet never saw fit to amend the close of the *Marsyas*—a legendary lyric perfect but for intrusion of what is called a cockney rhyme. As he lived to reprint his works over and over again, well beyond middle age, and always treated them with respect, there is an end of the matter ; but it is a thousand pities that it was his fate not to see what was wanted here—

“Not to see Apollo's scorn ;—  
Ah, poor Faun, poor Faun ! ah, poor Faun !”

The last lyric of *The Harp-Player on Etna* has a peculiar claim to a place here ; and the poet himself selected both it and *Cadmus and Harmonia* for inclusion in the group of Lyric and Elegiac Poems in the Golden Treasury volume called *Selected Poems of Matthew Arnold*, published in 1878. In that volume *Apollo* is entitled *Apollo Musagetes*.

The early separate existence of the exquisite little legend *Cadmus and Harmonia*, sung to the harp by Callicles, had extended only to the three issues of the first series of Arnold's Poems—the volume in which *Sohrab and Rustum* appeared. In the *New Poems*, this early drama being revived bodily, the legend of *Cadmus and Harmonia* as well as the four songs forming *The Harp-Player on Etna* were reabsorbed into the poem from which they had been culled.

*Philomela* first appeared in 1852 in the *Poems (First Series)*. It figures in all three editions of that volume and in all the collected editions of Arnold's Poetry.

*Thekla's Answer*.—This translation from Schiller's *Wallenstein* appeared only in the first edition of the *Poems (First Series)*, 1852.

*Urania*.—Under the title of *Excuse* this poem was printed in the *Empedocles* volume and in the *Poems (Second Series)*. In the first collected edition the title was changed to *Urania*, which has been maintained in subsequent issues.

*Euphrosyne* first appeared as *Indifference* in the *Empedocles* volume. That title was kept for it in the *Poems (Second Series)*, but gave place in the first collected edition to *Euphrosyne*, which has since been maintained.

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*Destiny* is one of the few lyrics dropped altogether by their author after first publication. This piece occurs only in the *Empedocles* volume.

*Courage* was also abandoned to its fate after the withdrawal of the *Empedocles* volume, in which it was published.

*Faded Leaves*.—Under this title in 1855, in the *Poems (Second Series)*, Arnold grouped the five poems appearing under it in the present edition. *Separation* was then first issued: the other four had appeared in the *Empedocles* volume.

*Despondency*, *Self-Deception*, *The Youth of Nature*, and *The Youth of Man* first appeared with *Empedocles* on Erna in 1852 and next in the Second Series in 1855. Meanwhile a portion of *The Youth of Man* had been included in the First Series under the title of *Richmond Hill*.

*Progress*, though also published in 1852 with *Empedocles*, was not selected for either the First or the Second Series, but was republished among the *New Poems* in 1867.

*Revolutions* first appeared with *Empedocles* and next in the Second Series of *Poems*.

*Self-Dependence* and *Morality*, issued with *Empedocles*, reappeared in all three editions of the *Poems (First Series)*.

*A Summer Night* and *The Buried Life* also first appeared with *Empedocles*, but were reserved for the Second Series of *Poems*.

*Lines Written in Kensington Gardens*.—This poem was one of those rejected from the collections of 1853 and 1855, to be revived in the *New Poems* with *Empedocles*, with which it had first appeared.

*The Future* appeared first with *Empedocles* in 1852 and then in all three editions of the *Poems (First Series)*. The passage

“Our minds  
Are confused as the cries which we hear,  
Changing and shot as the sights which we see—”

which has given pause to many readers, was there from the first. It would be difficult to find a passage in classical English in which the word *shot* is used in this absolute adjectival manner. Shelley has the past participle with

something of the same meaning in *Laon and Cythna* (Canto vii., Stanza xi.) :—

“ Thro’ which there shone the emerald beams of heaven,  
Shot thro’ the lines of many waves inwoven  
Like sunlight thro’ acacia woods at even,”

and Tennyson in *The Dying Swan* (1842) has

“ And far thro’ the matish green and still  
The tangled water-courses slept,  
Shot over with purple, and green, and yellow.”

But the term *shot* as a frankly adjectival description of a figurative iridescence of the human mind seems to have been reserved for Arnold. This is probably to be explained by the indubitable fact that, towards the end of the first half of this century, dresses of “ shot silk ” came so much into vogue as to bring the word *shot* in that sense into familiar household use. These iridescent silk-stuffs went out of fashion and stayed out of fashion for some thirty years ; and the word in that sense became scarce ; but it has come back lately with the fabrics. It is not a very desirable word for a solemn context treating of man’s mind.